

Minute on Immigrant Detention

On October 13, 2019, Meeting for Business approved the following **Minute**.

Friends' testimonies of Equality, Integrity, Peace, and Community inform our opposition to the cruel and illegal treatment of asylum seekers and immigrants by US government agencies at the US/Mexico border.

In the name of U.S. citizens, our government is committing violence against people, including infants and children, who have left violence or extreme poverty in their own countries and come to us, as have many of our own ancestors, with the hope of finding a better life. Instead they have been de-humanized in overcrowded, unsafe, and unsanitary detention centers.

This criminalization of asylum-seeking and standard of treatment stokes hatred, not love, and damages people in ways that are likely to diminish their capacities to live in love and peace with other people. The effects of this kind of trauma are particularly debilitating and long lasting for children, who may indeed never recover their full capacity to live in love and peace with others and themselves. The violence enacted by current U.S. policies towards detainees harms not only the individuals detained; treating people as less than human harms the men and women employed to monitor those detained.

Beginning with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, the situation at the border results, in part, from a long history of US economic exploitation and US-supported wars in Central America. Most recently, our government's withdrawal of aid to support anti-corruption efforts in these countries has facilitated the activities of gangs and corrupt elected officials.

We diminish the moral authority of the United States by: treating asylum seekers and their children as non-human, slowing the processing system, ignoring the 1951 international agreement to accept asylum seekers, crippling the immigration system with overworked judges and preventing people from accessing U.S. resources because of their nation of origin, their religion, and their skin color.

Therefore, we oppose:

- The criminalization of asylum-seeking;
- the illegal and immoral separation of children and parents;

- the detention of children and parents in crowded and unsanitary facilities without access to running water, food, beds, and medical care;
- the monetization of immigrant detention by private companies;
- the ongoing efforts of our government to deny due process and entry to asylum seekers.

We urge:

- The US government follow the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees which makes asylum seeking a legal act;
- The US government increase funding to expand the system of processing people seeking asylum in an efficient and humane manner;
- The US government reunite children and families;
- The US government close for-profit detention centers;
- A sensible immigration policy that honors the US history of welcoming immigrants while maintaining safe borders.

We encourage Friends everywhere to make public our witness with letters to the media and to their legislators; to become familiar with the statistics and issues of the situation at the US/Mexican border; to join other faith communities in protest of the US policies on immigration.

Sources and Further Readings:

Criminalization of immigration:

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<https://www.aclu.org/other/issue-brief-criminalizing-undocumented-immigrants>

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/16/headlines/trump_announces_radical_plan_to_bar_all_most_all_migrants_from_seeking_asylum_at_us_border

1951 refugee convention:

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/1951-refugee-convention.html>

Detention of citizens:

<https://www.npr.org/2019/07/25/745417268/u-s-citizen-detained-for-weeks-nearly-deported-by-immigration-officials>

<https://www.npr.org/2019/07/25/745417268/u-s-citizen-detained-for-weeks-nearly-deported-by-immigration-officials>

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/24/headlines/immigration_agents_detain_texas_teen_for_3_weeks_despite_being_a_us_citizen

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/us/julia-isabel-amparo-medina.html>

Denial of due process:

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/23/headlines/trump_admin_expands_deportation_powers_putting_100_000s_of_undocumented_immigrant_at_risk

Detention conditions:

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/26/headlines/44_year_old_mexican_immigrant_dies_in_ice_custody

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/02/us/politics/border-center-migrant-detention.html>

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/07/1041991>

<https://time.com/5623148/migrant-detention-centers-conditions/>

Private companies and detention:

<https://www.gq.com/story/private-profit-detention-centers>

<https://www.npr.org/2019/06/30/736940431/under-siege-and-largely-secret-businesses-that-serve-immigration-detention>

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/11/headlines/ice_opens_three_new_immigration_jails_flouting_congressional_limits_on_jailing_migrants

US activity in Latin America:

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/3/20/trump_bolsonaro_join_forces_to_back https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/12/manuel_zelaya_honduras_coup_immigration_crisis

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/5/2/headlines/trump_administration_says_it_may_go_to_war_to_oust_venezuelan_president

<https://www.apnews.com/2ded14659982426c9b2552827734be83>

<https://chomsky.info/roquestates04/>

<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/noam-chomsky-migrants-are-fleeing-horrors-created-by-the-u-s-1.6695006>

Climate change Latin America:

<https://news.berkeley.edu/2019/07/08/climate-change-could-fuel-next-wave-of-immigrants-from-latin-america/>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-07-15/climate-change-contributing-migration-central-american-refugees>

Trauma, kids in detention:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/health/migrant-children-mental-health.html>

https://www.democracynow.org/2019/6/17/headlines/youngest_separated_migrant_was_4_months_old_baby