



Dear President Trump,

We the undersigned write to express our profound concern at the administration's decision to deport migrants from U.S. custody and expel asylum-seekers at the border in the midst of a global public health crisis. We urge you to immediately halt deportations and expulsions from the United States for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly when these policies result in the return of migrants who may have already contracted the virus to countries with weak public health systems.

The United States has become one of the world's "hotspots" for the transmission of COVID-19. Removing people from our country and sending them to places around the globe that are grappling with the long-term effects of civil war, natural disaster, displacement, extreme poverty, or genocide, only risks spreading the disease further and heightening the risks for all humanity. Please suspend deportations for the duration of this crisis, while continuing to respect the right to voluntarily depart the United States, and withdraw efforts to compel more countries to process U.S. deportations through visa sanctions.

Deportation is a false remedy for the very real health concerns posed by confining migrants in close quarters during a pandemic. The safe and compassionate way to address the dangers of detention is not to place people on deportation flights—where they will also be at heightened risk of contracting or transmitting the virus; nor is it to expel people across the border to countries with limited public health resources. Rather, migrants should be released on humanitarian parole to shelter-in-place with their families, friends, and volunteer sponsors.

Migrants who are held in detention centers have the same human right to health and wellbeing as all other people. No one deserves to die of a disease due to crowded conditions that are well within the administration's power to avert. Please use your authority to reduce the number of people held in detention centers during the COVID-19 crisis, through community-based alternatives to detention, humanitarian parole, and other mechanisms.

Finally, we urge you to reverse the policies your administration has adopted that deprive asylum-seekers of a fair chance to present their claim to U.S. authorities for humanitarian protection. In particular, we ask that you rescind the March 20 "Order Suspending Introduction of Certain Persons from Countries Where a Communicable Disease Exists" (subsequently renewed on April 20), which your administration has used to expel asylum-seekers and unaccompanied children without due process. These expulsions constitute unlawful push-backs and risk returning people to the hands of their persecutors.

U.S. law, as well as our international treaty obligations, are designed to protect people—particularly vulnerable children—from being sent back to places where they will face torture, trafficking, and persecution. As President, you have sworn to uphold and enforce the laws passed by Congress. Please honor this obligation by restoring full protections for asylum-seekers and unaccompanied children. Our country has the resources and ability to uphold human rights—even in the course of responding to a major public health crisis.

Sincerely,

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