

Preliminary Report and Findings:

# Militarization and Impunity at the Border

*Emergency National Border Justice  
& Solidarity Community Tour*

June 15-18, 2006



*At the U.S.-Mexico Border  
in Tucson-Douglas-Sásabe, Arizona,  
U.S.*

*and Agua Prieta-Altar-Sásabe-  
Nogales Sonora, México*



Prepared by the  
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
With Coalición de Derechos Humanos



## Preliminary Report and Findings:

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## Emergency National Border Justice & Solidarity Community Tour June 15-18, 2006

*Sponsored by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights with the Coalición de Derechos Humanos*

### Executive Summary

On June 15–18, 2006, the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights with the Coalición de Derechos Humanos, based in Tucson, Arizona, conducted the ***Emergency National Border Justice & Solidarity Community Tour*** at the U.S. – Mexico border. A 45-person delegation representing 30 organizations from across the U.S. spent almost four days in continuous activity -- meetings with community organizations, faith-based groups, human rights groups, Indigenous peoples, federal public defenders, and others on both sides of the international border.

**The national border community tour was an urgent response to the escalating crisis at the border**, reaching dangerous new levels in the weeks before our trip. In mid-May, President George W. Bush had authorized over \$1.2 billion dollars to deploy 6,000 National Guard troops to help patrol the border; 1,600 were on the borderline before the end of the month. This presidential action was just weeks into what border community groups call the **“season of death,”** when temperatures in the desert region soar and, even though less migrants cross because of the extreme and deadly conditions, more migrants die than any other season while traversing the border.

The tour was organized to help spotlight and expose the deepening humanitarian and rights crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border resulting from the militarization of immigration and border control. The national community border tour was also organized to explicitly offer solidarity and support to migrants, border communities and their organizations that are bearing the brunt of this crisis.

The national community border tour brought members and leaders of diverse community organizations from across the U.S. to meet with



**Altar offering of candles at El Tiradito Shrine for fallen migrants during a weekly vigil in Tucson, Az.**

grassroots groups and leaders at the U.S.-Mexico border region to learn directly about border militarization. Delegates also learned how border community groups are tackling the humanitarian crisis and together explored ways to support their demands for public accountability, community stability and human rights. In concluding the tour, participants committed that ***a national spotlight is desperately needed to help end the intolerable conditions imposed by the militarized policies of border control.***

## critical observations:

- Although community organizations, faith-based groups, human rights advocates, environmentalists and Indigenous peoples at the border have consistently proposed policies and alternatives to uphold the human rights and safety of all residents, workers, communities and migrants at the border, border control and immigration enforcement strategies have systematically violated the rights, destabilized the region, and poisoned the border's environment and natural habitat, without any evaluation of the results and impacts or accountability to those being impacted.
- The humanitarian crisis at the border is also the result of “trading rights” – some policy advocacy groups and lawmakers have supported draconian border “security,” militarization and other enforcement strategies that undermine the rights of all communities -- and without consulting the impacted communities at the border.
- An estimated **5,000 migrant dead** have been found on the U.S.-Mexico border since the current strategy of border security and militarization of immigration law enforcement was implemented in 1994 -- with at least half in the Arizona border region.
- Through wall-building, intensified policing and military surveillance of border urban and suburban regions and their surrounding areas, **migrants are intentionally pushed further and further into desolate regions of the border** where even walls cannot be built and where Border Patrol agents cannot enter with their all-terrain vehicles.
- Migrants at the border are also more vulnerable to racist violence, violations of their rights, subjected to deadly force and abuse at the hands of unscrupulous Border Patrol agents, police, smugglers, employers and others who take advantage of their immigration status and perceived lack of rights and protections.
- Residents of border communities are also subjected to stepped up racial profiling, unconstitutional detentions and other draconian state and local policies and laws, diminishing their civil rights and civil liberties, criminalizing migrants, youth and workers and placing communities under siege, where Border Patrol agents and other law enforcement and government officials act with impunity.

Members of the national border community tour also strategized to address and identify ways to report back what they learned and saw during their tour of the border. This ***included deepening a shared understanding of the linkages between interior immigration enforcement and border control and how border security and militarization affects all communities.***

Border tour members discussed ways to ensure that the demand for just border policies that protect the civil rights, civil liberties and human rights of border and non-border communities, migrants and immigrants are at the center of the immigration reform debates and guide policy-making. To this end, members of delegation agreed to organize report-back activities and events and to support and participate in the unfolding national dialogue on border issues.

## Recommendations for Action

At the end of the Emergency National Border Justice & Solidarity Community Tour, three major follow-up initiatives were proposed ***to break the national and international silence*** on the militarization and impunity of immigration control at the U.S.-Mexico border.

- ✓ NNIRR with CDH will organize **delegations of diverse communities** to visit the border to see first-hand the worsening conditions and militarization at the border.
- ✓ NNIRR with CDH will organize and **offer humanitarian aid and solidarity with border community groups** and human rights advocates defending the rights of migrants.

- ✓ NNIRR and the CDH will advance a **“National Dialogue on Immigration Control and Border Militarization”** to develop and promote shared solutions and alternatives to end the humanitarian crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border. This “dialogue” will include outreach and discussions at different venues, conferences and events of the immigrant rights, social justice, environmental and racial justice movements; inviting members of border community groups to participate and present at our organizations’ activities and events; the publication and dissemination of fact sheets, documentation of border abuses and sharing the border community groups’ “best practices” and lessons from defending human rights and civil liberties.

Further, NNIRR and CDH reassert that the call for border demilitarization, human rights and accountability in immigration law enforcement are indispensable for an immigration program that provides legalization and access to permanent

residency and citizenship, enforces labor protections for all workers, and includes more options for legal immigration. Our immigration policy must uphold the principles of **human rights and community safety** on the border and in the interior of the U.S. and ensure that immigrant workers have opportunities for economic equity. Immigrant families, workers and communities deserve legalization with rights, full labor protections and family reunification – not more guest worker programs, border militarization, immigrant prisons and deportations.

In conclusion, the first part of the national dialogue on immigration control and borders will culminate in a **national strategy meeting** to sum up our understanding of the relationship between national security, militarization, and the “war on terror” to border control and immigration services and enforcement to develop a shared agenda that would end the crisis on the border, working to achieve human rights.

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# The Emergency National Justice & Solidarity Border Community Tour

*Many members of the national border community tour felt a powerful experience and transformation when confronted with the harsh reality of the U.S.-Mexico border: the desert and its excruciating heat, the overwhelming presence of heavily armed immigration police; buses with huge logos declaring, "Department of Homeland Security," used as mobile holding cells for migrants arrested en route. Border Patrol vehicles appeared after every five or six cars on the roads, with roving immigration checkpoints, portable watchtowers and imposing walls separating communities abutting the borderline.*

*Who could believe that human beings would dare to cross on foot under these daunting conditions with one or two gallons of water, braving a gauntlet of border patrol, police, armed vigilante hate groups and attempting to survive the forbidding natural world of the desert?*

We members of the national border community tour came to the border to find out that in spite of man-made and natural barriers, rampant human rights violations, militarization and the deadly terrain, ***human beings were risking everything to be with their families and work for exploitative wages and under miserable conditions.***

Forty-five persons representing 30 organizations from New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas, New Mexico, Washington state, California and Arizona converged on Tucson, Arizona border region during June 15-18, 2006. Members of the national border community tour came from African American, Indigenous, Asian Pacific Island, Latino, Arab, South Asian and Muslim communities. They represented organizers and advocates from immigrant community-based groups, human rights, civil rights, labor rights, day laborer, civil liberties and human rights organizations.

## Political Background For the Emergency Tour

On July 31, 2006 -- a month and half after members of the "Emergency National Border Justice & Solidarity Community Tour" had

returned to their homes -- the 171st migrant death was recorded by the Coalición de Derechos Humanos ([www.derechoshumanosaz.net](http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net)) on the Arizona border with Mexico alone. An average of two migrant dead are found on the border every day. By the end of fiscal year 2006 (October 1, 2005-September 30, 2006), a total of 195 migrant dead were found on the border on the Arizona alone, without the final tally from Pima County for the month of September 2006.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), the research arm of Congress, reported in its August 2006 report on immigration enforcement that border deaths have doubled since 1995 even though the number of unauthorized crossings have not. The GAO also confirmed that the biggest increases in deaths have been in the Arizona desert. In 2005, a record number, 472 migrant dead were found on the U.S.-Mexico border; some 285 alone in Arizona. While there is still no systematic tracking of all migrant deaths on the border, not just those found by the Border Patrol, the total number recorded so far is close to 5,000.

Instead of assessing the effectiveness and results of this border security and militarization strategy, **President George Bush authorized over \$3 billion more in funding for border militarization for fiscal year 2007 alone**, including deploying 6,000 National Guard troops in May 2006 to patrol the border and to build hundreds of miles of border walls. Since 1994, almost \$35 billion has been spent on immigration border control alone. Up until 2002, the non-partisan Public Policy Institute of California had prepared the only study that had evaluated the results of this strategy, declaring these policies a "failure" at their intended purpose, stopping unauthorized migration, and concluded that they have only resulted in more migrant deaths.

The U.S. Congress and the Bush Administration continue pursuing and implementing policies and laws expanding border militarization as the centerpiece to immigration control, ignoring the deadly results and the humanitarian crisis at the

U.S.-Mexico border. The rights and lives of communities and migrants at the border have been the most impacted. The continuing militarization and almost exclusive reliance on immigration policing, detention and deportation of documented and undocumented immigrants relies on the pattern of “trading rights,” or pitting the interests and rights of one community against the rights of others, especially at the border, in the debate and negotiations over immigration reforms without their consultation or input.

This has been due to both the willful disregard for the human rights and civil liberties of border communities, migrants and immigrants. However, the responsibility for the brutal state of affairs and the humanitarian crisis at the border is the product of more than twelve years of border control policies officially called “prevention through deterrence.” First piloted in late 1993 in the El Paso, Texas border region and then extended to the rest of the border in 1994, this set of official border control policies and strategies deliberately force migrants to risk their lives to get into the U.S.

**In order to break with this pattern of rights trading and expose the catastrophe at the border, we believed it was indispensable for immigrant rights organizers and policy advocates to go to the border and witness for themselves the results of this border militarization and impunity.**

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## **The Tour Begins at the *El Tiradito Shrine***

The emergency border community tour kicked off by participating in the weekly evening vigil for fallen migrants at the El Tiradito Shrine in Tucson, which has been held every Thursday for the past seven years. The delegation joined local community members to honor the memory of fallen migrants, offering solidarity and condolences to the families who have had loved ones die and disappear in the desert.

Early the next day the delegation met with staff of the Federal District Court. We listened to the

experiences and work of U.S. Magistrate Hector Estrada and Assistant Federal Public Defenders Yendi Castillo and Heather Williams on how the criminal justice system deals with the undocumented. Over 80% of the cases handled by the Federal District Courts in Arizona are about undocumented and documented immigrants in detention. Afterwards, we went into a courtroom seeing the face of the system criminalizing migrants. Delegation members witnessed the heartrending court proceedings against immigrants whose only crime was being undocumented and who were being sentenced to incredibly harsh prison terms that would end in banishment.

Next we drove to meet with Dr. Bruce Parks, head of the Pima County Medical Examiner’s Office, responsible for determining the cause of death and processing the remains of migrants. Then we continued on our journey to meet next with members of the No More Deaths coalition, working to prevent migrant deaths, and scholars working on documenting migrant border deaths at the Southside Presbyterian Church, the first church to declare itself a sanctuary for Central American refugees fleeing the U.S.-led wars during the 1980s. No More Deaths reported that for every migrant dead found and counted at least ten others have died, disappearing in the folds of the desert. Migrants crossing the desert need at least sixteen gallons of water to endure the crossing. Yet migrants carry at most two gallons with them on the deadly trek, each gallon weighing up to eight pounds, they said.

That afternoon, the national border community tour members traveled to Agua Prieta – Douglas, Arizona’s border twin city in Mexico – where they met with humanitarian aid and faith-based groups that put drinking water for migrants in the desert and provide shelter and assistance to those in distress. To get there, we hopped into three vans driving several hours to Douglas, Arizona, where we drove alongside the border wall, which is being extended through the heart of Douglas and Agua Prieta, two sister border cities literally cut apart by a wall consisting of steel beams and sidings welded together by Marine engineering units. As we drove alongside the wall, we saw several Border Patrol Bronco jeeps with tires in tow dragging on the ground to more easily spot any crosser’s

footprints, raising swirls of dust and damaging the natural habitat.

It was early evening that Friday as we drove across the international boundary into Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico, heading straight to the offices and workshop spaces of Just Coffee, a community-run fair trade coffee growers collective. Upon arriving, we were offered tasty samples of freshly brewed, fair trade coffee that we drank as members of the collective told us about their work and accomplishments. Just Coffee was organized by returned migrants who sought ways to create sustainable options instead of having to involuntarily leave their homes to the U.S. Members of Just Coffee come from Chiapas and other coffee growing regions of Mexico, directly selling their coffee produce and exclusively benefiting their communities through fair trade.

Then everyone went to the nearby Centro de la Esperanza to listen to a panel of community leaders, including faith groups, Indigenous peoples and others that assist migrants share with the delegation their challenging work and needs. The U.S. militarization of the border has encouraged a new form of hate violence: unknown members of anti-immigrant and vigilante groups tilt over water containers that are placed in the routes used by migrants in the desert. Other containers are shot with holes, intentionally causing the water to drain. This causes some migrants to avoid drinking water when they find intact water containers, fearing the water has been poisoned. Now Agua Por Vida (Water for Life), which places water in the desert, has resorted to only placing water on the Mexican side of the border because of this upsetting hate crime being committed against migrants, sending the

message of wishing them death in the desert.

*In spite of our reactions to the harsh situation presented to the delegation, the clear voices and strong spirit of solidarity of the community groups doing this critical work made us feel more hope than anguish, where human solidarity and community trump the wall of death attempting to divide us.* The meeting ended over a home-cooked meal of tamales, rice and beans and more talking and discussion of border and migrant issues. Then we drove late in the night returning back to Tucson.

## On the Desert Route From Altar to Sásabe, Sonora, Mexico

The next day members of the emergency border community tour would see first-hand the dangerous journey migrants undertake as a result of official border control policies that deliberately force them to risk their lives in order to reunite with their families and find work to survive. On Saturday morning, the delegation left Tucson early in the morning after a full meeting that started at six a.m. We headed off in the vans to Nogales,



Delegation Members take a brief break in Sasabe.

Arizona crossing through Nogales, Sonora on the Mexican side and then to Altar.

The national border community tour members spent the last day in Altar and Sásabe in the Mexican border state of Sonora, called the **“migrant bottleneck of North America”** by the *New York Times*. We spent the day speaking and meeting with migrants, community groups, owners of *casa de huéspedes* – makeshift hotels for migrants - - and residents before retracing the route migrants to reach desert border crossing routes.

We traveled – albeit in the safety of air-conditioned vans – the route used by migrants who attempt to cross into the U.S., seeing how dangerous and grueling the desert trek is for migrants who undertake this treacherous journey. Delegation members only came to the edge of the extremely deadly desert terrain, experienced the pounding heat, and realized how punishing the journey is for migrants who want to reunite with their families in the U.S. but have no other option than to brave crossing through the desert and mountains.

## **Redefining the Landscape of the Call for Border Demilitarization and Human Rights**

As part of their participation, delegation members were asked to share their experiences and discussions from the border with their members and constituencies when they returned home. The Emergency National Justice and Solidarity Border Community Tour is also considered the opening salvo in a long-term and strategic national dialogue on border control, immigration law enforcement – including reforms that could end or ameliorate the suffering and deaths of migrants at the border, demanding accountability and restoration of rights. For this reason, we also engaged in discussions and dialogue throughout the border tour so that participating groups could consider adopting the demand for demilitarization and restoration of full civil liberties and human rights at the border as part of their work and vision.

With members of the “Liberty and Justice for All Campaign,” we also subsequently organized a series of community hearings in Washington state, Michigan and Arizona that included critical perspectives on immigration control, border security and militarization. In August 2006, NNIRR co-organized a national community hearing in Tucson with DH, framing the hearing as both a response to the exclusion of community voices and alternatives from the Republican-led hearings on border security and immigration during the summer and as part of our ongoing and evolving national dialogue.



We expect the national dialogue to culminate in a national strategy meeting to reflect the community perspectives and analyses of the impacts of border militarization and human rights policy proposals and recommendations for a different type of border security that includes community-based accountability and oversight and providing legal and safe means for migrants to enter the U.S.

## Key Lessons

Members of the Emergency National Border Justice & Solidarity Community Tour learned that:

- Community organizations, faith-based groups, human rights advocates, environmentalists and Indigenous peoples at the border have consistently proposed policies and alternatives to uphold the human rights and safety of all residents, workers, communities and migrants at the border. Instead, the U.S. government, under the direction of the Bush Administration, continues expanding the disastrous border control and immigration enforcement strategies that systematically violate the rights of communities, Indigenous peoples and migrants at the border – endangering their lives, destabilizing the region, poisoning the border’s environment and destroying the natural habitat, without any evaluation of the results and impacts or accountability to those being impacted.
- The humanitarian crisis at the border is also the result of “trading rights,” where some institutions, even civil rights groups and others that promote immigrants rights, negotiate with policymakers, immigration law enforcement and other public officials supporting draconian border “security,” militarization and other enforcement strategies that undermine the rights of all communities, without consulting the impacted communities at the border.
- An estimated 5,000 migrant dead have been found on the U.S.-Mexico border since the current strategy of border security and militarization of immigration law enforcement was implemented in 1994, with at least half of the migrant dead found on the Arizona border region alone.
- The border control and militarization strategies are not failed policies but a deliberate policy and strategy to force migrants to risk their lives, if they choose to enter the U.S. without authorization, by crossing through the most dangerous and isolated desert and mountain terrain of the border region.
- Through wall-building, intensified policing and military surveillance of border urban and suburban regions and their surrounding areas, migrants are intentionally pushed further and further into desolate regions of the border where even walls cannot be built and where Border Patrol agents cannot enter with their all-terrain vehicles.
- Every year hundreds of migrants -- including children, women, men and the elderly -- are found dead from dehydration and exposure to the natural elements in the deserts and mountains of Arizona and New Mexico and parts of the California and Texas sectors of the border.
- Migrants who survive at the border are also more vulnerable to racist violence, violations of their rights, subjected to deadly force and abuse at the hands of unscrupulous Border Patrol agents, police, smugglers, employers and others who take advantage of their immigration status and perceived lack of rights and protections.
- Border communities suffer widespread abuse and the impunity at the hands of Border Patrol and other immigration policing and local law enforcement officials, including repressive state laws and agencies working to restrict their rights and access to services. They are also subjected to hate violence and those who stand up for their rights and those of migrants are subjected to racist harassment and death threats, while federal, state and local authorities allow armed hate groups to act without restraint.
- In April 2005 the anti-immigrant, vigilante Minutemen, a small group of white supremacists, racists and xenophobes, initiated a national hate campaign in support of the border militarization strategy by setting up armed patrols to capture migrants in a small area of the U.S.-Mexico border. During the same period, the Department of Homeland Security intensified their “Arizona Border Control Initiative,” concentrating hundreds

- more Border Patrol agents and enforcement resources to blockade even further the border areas that are near cities, roads and highways, purportedly in response to outcries for more border reinforcements.
- Residents of border communities are also subjected to stepped up racial profiling, unconstitutional detentions and other draconian state and local policies and laws, diminishing their civil rights and civil liberties, criminalizing migrants, youth and workers, and placing communities under siege, where Border Patrol agents and other law enforcement and government officials act with impunity.
  - The border region has been the laboratory for many repressive immigration control and enforcement tactics and policies that are extended continually into the interior of the country. Militarized policing, police-ICE collaboration, deportation without due process and heightened surveillance are examples of measures first experimented with on the border which are now routinely used across the country, in immigrant and non-immigrant communities alike. The border serves as a central predictor of the type of law enforcement policies that await non-border communities.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The U.S. government could have easily prevented the brutal crisis at the border just *by providing sufficient numbers of family reunification visas so that migrants could enter the country safely and legally to live and work with full rights and protections*. Instead, the U.S. government intensifies militarization and impunity, building more walls and other barriers, increasing the numbers of Border Patrol agents, deploying National Guard troops on the line, building jails and other detention facilities and installing high tech surveillance of the border. Furthermore, U.S. immigration and border control policies are fanning anti-immigrant racism and xenophobia, linking the “war on terror” and national security to immigration reform.

The U. S. government’s insistence on framing the issues of migration as law enforcement and national security matters has prevented acknowledging and addressing the negative displacement impacts and involuntary migration of workers caused by economic restructuring, particularly the North American Free Trade Agreement. The U.S. government’s refusal to acknowledge the root causes of migration has blocked any dialogue from taking place to promote economically-sustainable development for communities in the sending countries, which would result in an eventual decrease in migration flows.

We can expect more militarization, migrant deaths and widespread rights violations and abuse at the border and the interior. **Congress’s approval of the recent “Border Fence Act,” which authorizes the construction of an additional 700 miles of a double border wall, and the pending legislation that promises to further criminalize immigrant families, workers and communities gives no hope that the humanitarian crisis at the border and its extension into the U.S. interior will end any time soon.** In addition, the privatization of border security operations, including recent multi-billion dollar contracts for domestic private security corporations like Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Haliburton, to build prisons exclusively for immigrants, will only exacerbate this crisis by prioritizing profits over human rights.

Even without the looming Sensenbrenner bills in Congress, the next five years of immigration and border control have already been defined. The National Intelligence and Terrorism Prevention Act, signed into law by President Bush in December 2004, includes the doubling of the number of Border Patrol agents and the tripling of interior immigration police and an additional 8,000 prison beds for immigrants every year through 2010. The REAL ID Act, signed by President Bush as part of the Iraq war budget in May 2005, further links

interior and border immigration control to unprecedented levels. Among other things, the REAL ID Act creates a national ID card through state driver's licenses and will impact everyone's constitutional rights – citizen and non-citizen alike.

After President Bush authorized the deployment of National Guard troops in May, Congress authorized an additional \$1.9 billion for border militarization and security later that summer. And then President Bush authorized another \$1.2 billion to begin building the first 300 miles of the double border authorized by Congress in September.

Taking their cue from draconian federal laws and proposals, various states and cities across the U.S. are implementing anti-immigrant legislation ranging from imposing additional state taxes on the wages and remittances of alleged undocumented workers, to prohibiting landlords from renting to families and punishing employers who hire workers who cannot prove their status.

## For a border of peace, justice and dignity

*In order to re-establish the stability, to ensure peace with justice, safety, and the dignity of all communities on the U.S.-Mexico border, including stopping the inhumane treatment of migrants and the rampant abuse and violation of the rights of border communities and immigrants the U.S. government must:*

- **Implement routine programs of legalization** that expand access to visas and provide access to permanent residency including future flows. Systematic legalization programs – recognizing human, labor, environmental, and civil rights – will ensure that migrants have options to unite with their families and avoid mortal danger.
- **End the deadly border enforcement strategies;** instead protect the human rights and constitutional liberties of all immigrants and communities on the U.S.-Mexico border. This includes but is not limited to issuing sufficient visas so that all migrants that wish to can enter the country legally and safely and are not forced to choose between risking their lives crossing through the desert and mountains or subjecting themselves to inhumane violations of their rights and abuse just to reunite with their families and find work to survive.
- **Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border and cease all enforcement policies, practices, measures, laws, and strategies that criminalize migrants** forcing them into crossing through the most dangerous areas in the mountains and deserts where hundreds die every year. And, prevent the initiation of policies, laws, practices and measures to militarize the U.S.-Canada border;
- **Address the backlog and facilitate family reunification** by increasing visas and more legal options allowing migrants to cross safely and not risk their lives at the hands of smugglers, unscrupulous employers, or immigration officials who act with impunity and jeopardize public safety;
- **Repeal draconian federal criminal laws** that prosecute and incarcerate migrants for merely crossing the border without inspection.
- **End the deportation of permanent residents, including ending indefinite detention** or its expansion, preserving due process rights and restoring access to the courts and meaningful judicial review for all immigrants.
- **Develop bi-lateral migration policies and practices that uphold the human rights of migrants,** which are accountable to independent, civilian community-based monitoring and oversight;

- **Restore the civil rights, civil liberties and human rights of border communities and immigrants everywhere.**
- **Grant unrestricted crossing rights for members of Indigenous nations and communities** living on both sides of the border.
- Enhance the safety of border communities and protect migrants by **demilitarizing the borders, including tearing down the walls along the U.S.-Mexico border**, and establishing accountability mechanisms for independent civilian and community-based monitoring and oversight;
- Clearly and publicly **declare its opposition to private vigilante groups** and the hateful acts they perpetrate, and prosecute any criminal activity against immigrants and others;
- **Create an independent monitoring and accountability mechanism** that directly engages impacted communities in holding the Department of Homeland Security accountable for its immigration enforcement and detention policies and initiatives;
- **Transfer federal spending from border militarization to genuine “border security” programs including health care, housing, education, living wages, social security and fair trade** between communities straddling the border and other nations;
- **Stop collaborating with other countries targeting migrants for arrest and detention** and cooperate with neighboring nations to implement economic and social policies that effectively resolve problems of unsustainable development caused by “free” trade policies, which are the root cause of forced displacement and involuntary international migration;
- **End and reverse the privatization of border control and national security operations**, which is rewarding private security contractors that have abysmal human rights records and corruptive practices in Iraq, Palestine, New Orleans and elsewhere;
- **Abandon all plans to militarize the U.S.-Canada border**, virtually and physically, as contemplated in recently passed Congressional legislation calling for a “study” of the militarization of the northern border, including the high technological surveillance of the U.S.-Mexico border.
- **De-link the policies and politics of national security and the “war on terror” from all immigration services and enforcement** and give priority to “human security,” fulfilling the human rights, economic well-being, civil liberties, labor protections, health, safety and freedom from fear and instability, for all communities and individuals regardless of their citizenship or immigration status; and,
- **Transfer all border and interior immigration services and enforcement functions now under the Department of Homeland Security back to the Department of Justice**, including the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Bureau of Border Protection and Customs, and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, previously under the Immigration and Naturalization Services.
- **Address the root causes of involuntary migration and forced displacement in sending countries** by ending “free” trade and other structural adjustment programs imposed on the global south by U.S.-controlled international financial institutions. Support sustainable economic development instead.
- **Make the United States a true partner in international cooperation by ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.**

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