

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice

Dear Mr. President, Secretary Johnson and Attorney General Holder:

As national faith-based organizations hailing from a diversity of traditions, we write to express our disappointment at the decision to delay acting to provide immigration relief for millions of our fellow community members. We also write to ask you to take immediate steps to address crucial human rights, civil rights, transparency, and governance issues that continue to plague the U.S. government's immigration enforcement practices. These enforcement practices endanger lives unnecessarily, undermine trust between border communities and federal law enforcement authorities, degrade the U.S. commitment to upholding the Refugee Convention and its anti-trafficking efforts, and violate the human rights of migrants.

Action on these discrete reforms should not await a formal announcement on broader relief after the elections this November. The Administration can and should address the following issues immediately:

- 1) End particularly dangerous deportation practices that exacerbate the vulnerability of deported migrants to trafficking, exploitation, or violence, including: night-time deportations, deportations to dangerous locations, deporting family members separately, and not returning cell phones, money, medication and other belongings needed for health and safety prior to deportation.
- 2) Change current Customs and Border Protection (CBP) lethal use of force policies, with particular attention to their lack of parity with other federal standards requiring agents and officers to exhaust lesser force to the extent practicable or safe. The frequent and inappropriate lethal use of force by U.S. Border Patrol has led to the violent deaths of at least 29 individuals, including U.S. citizens, since 2010.

- 3) Address the continued lack of accountability and lack of responsiveness to complaints at CBP, which have left communities feeling militarized, alienated, unsafe, criminalized and racially profiled. The changes announced allowing CBP Internal Affairs to conduct criminal investigations is a small step forward, but more must be done to fix the complaint process, establish a culture of zero-tolerance for abuse and respond to other community concerns.
- 4) Establish more robust administrative standards and a system to ensure compliance and oversight to regulate conditions at CBP detention facilities, which currently fail to live up to the most basic standards of health, sanitation and dignity. Additionally, it is well past time that DHS insist that all facilities holding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainees meet the 2011 Performance-based National Detention Standards. Those facilities unable to meet these minimum standards of care should have their contracts with ICE terminated.
- 5) End family detention, a failed and inhumane model of warehousing vulnerable families which was rightly curtailed in 2009 but has reemerged in recent months. Family Detention endangers child well-being, and is detrimental to legal access and due process for families with legitimate trafficking and asylum related claims. Families currently detained in these facilities are not flight risks or dangers to the community and should be immediately released.

The political calculus that led to the decision to delay broad-based immigration relief has little relevance in terms of efforts by the Administration to address these persistent shortfalls in upholding our country's commitment to human rights, accountability, due process, and transparency.

We look forward to discussing these steps with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers in Action  
American Baptist Churches, USA  
American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
American Jewish Committee  
Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness  
Church World Service  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
The Episcopal Church  
Faith in Public Life  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
HIAS  
Ignatian Solidarity Network  
Jesuit Conference of the United States

Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Pax Christi USA  
Refugee and Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas