

Statement of Catholic Bishops and Participants in Regional Consultation on Migration (North America, Central America and the Caribbean) San José, Costa Rica, June 3, 2011 (excerpts)
Taken from the July-August 2011 J/P Alert from CMSM

[The complete statement can be found on [the USCCB web site.](#)]

As Catholic bishops in charge of the pastoral care of migrants, gathered in San José, Costa Rica, June 1-3, 2011, with the participation of CELAM and CARITAS International and joined by religious and lay experts on issues of migration, we once again express our solidarity with our migrant brothers and sisters in this hemisphere who migrate in search of a better life. While we acknowledge the right of sovereign nations to enact laws, we nevertheless regard as unjust and inhuman, and therefore requiring change or abolition, those laws that cause the separation of migrant families, arbitrary detention and threats to life. All of these consequences are reflected in:

The Increased Violence Against and Kidnapping of Migrants by Organized Crime. The dramatic increase of kidnappings and murders of migrants, in Mexico, by crime organizations requires an urgent response.

The Increase in Deportations between the United States and Mexico. The U.S. government, with support from the U.S. Congress, had deported a record number of migrants in the past two years, despite the request of the Catholic Church to work for a reform of U.S. immigration laws, which would include the legalization of undocumented workers and their families. We urge the U.S. government to change course and protect immigrants and their families regardless of their migratory status.

The Tragedy of Human Trafficking. Those who live in poverty continue to be victims of human trafficking in our hemisphere, especially vulnerable are the unaccompanied migrant children, who are often victims in the countries of transit and destination. To be sure, important steps have been made over the past ten years to address this humanitarian problem, but much more is required. We express our support for anti-trafficking efforts and for increased services to victims. We urge vigilance on the part of our governments and fellow citizens in fighting this tragedy, until it is eliminated from our hemisphere and the entire world.

Growing Economic Inequality. As we have stated in the past, the ultimate solution to migration is development and economic opportunities throughout the hemisphere, so that families can find work and live in dignity in their countries of origin. More attention must be paid to this economic inequity, especially when economic integration and free trade agreements are considered between countries of our hemisphere.

The Effects of Globalization on Human Persons. We live in an era in which goods, capital, and communication are exchanged globally in a short period. However, the human beings on the move who provide the labor to keep economies growing do not receive legal protection. Our governments cannot continue to benefit from the labor of the undocumented without offering them legal protections...As a moral matter, this situation cannot continue. We urge those nations

which have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families to approve it and bring their legislation into harmony with it, creating public policies that respect the spirit of the Convention for migrants, independent of their migratory status.

The Increasing Threats to Agents of the Pastoral Care of Migrants in their Role as Defenders of Human Rights. This is a drama that has increased in Mexico, hunting down many men and women whose pastoral work in solidarity with our brothers and sisters has become a threat, especially to the criminal gangs and some officials who collude with them, who have lost the sense of seeing the person and see the migrant as a commodity.

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall continue to “welcome the stranger,” as He taught us: bringing to life the scene of the person who fell into the hands of robbers and the action of the good person, who representing Jesus *bound up his wounds ... and took care of him* (Lk. 10, 25-37), and invite us to do the same: to care for him, because “for whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.” (Mt. 25:35, 40).