



California Welcoming Task Force Groups Call for Humanitarian Reception for People Seeking Safety

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San Diego, CA — For the past nearly three years, the U.S. government has used a policy called Title 42 to expel people seeking asylum without due process under the pretext of the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy, which has been linked to countless instances of kidnapping, torture, theft, and murder of forcibly displaced people—especially Black, indigenous and other people of color and the LGBTQI+ community—was set to lift today until the Supreme Court of the United States earlier this week stayed a District Court order declaring the policy unlawful. While Title 42 remains the subject of debate and litigation in Washington and in the courts, people from around the world continue to seek safety and an opportunity to escape the violence of political persecution, discrimination and other injustices.

The goal of the members of the California Welcoming Task Force is to promote respect for the right to seek asylum and provide critical services to people fleeing danger. We stand united in our opposition to alarming attempts to attack and criminalize displaced people and the work of human rights organizations along the border. We remain ready to work with our civil society partners and all levels of government to build and maintain infrastructure and networks to welcome people at the U.S.-Mexico border humanely, responsibly, and with kindness. Working together, we know that this is possible. We call on all levels of government to implement policies and provide the resources necessary to do so.

Statements from California Welcoming Task Force member organizations:

Nicole Ramos, Border Rights Project Director at Al Otro Lado:

“While the “leaders” of our nation give lip service to the lie that the United States government is a champion of human rights, a country that strictly adheres to the “rule of law,” time and time again they show us their true selves, that what they really want is a world of walls and barbed wire, a world where thousands of human beings

who would otherwise have survived, wind up dying on our doorstep while we manufacture justifications for a closed border, denying refugees the right to access the only legal process available to save their lives.”

Kate Clark, senior director of immigration services, Jewish Family Service of San Diego:

“Asylum seekers have a legal right to seek protection in the U.S., and the complete – and long overdue – termination of Title 42 will be a key restoration of that right. While we await the lifting of Title 42, thousands of vulnerable families and individuals in desperate need of protection continue to be left in dangerous conditions with no relief. This is an unacceptable reality, and we call on the federal government to do its part to put an end to this inhumane practice once and for all, while also building the necessary infrastructure to support it.”

Norma Chávez-Peterson, Executive Director of the ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties:

“The right to seek asylum is a human right and we cannot continue to turn our backs on people seeking protection from violence and persecution. It is well past time to end Title 42. Every day this inhumane policy is allowed to continue, people’s lives are in danger. Now more than ever, the federal government should swiftly dedicate the resources necessary to allow people to exercise the right to seek safety in the U.S. with dignity and respect.

“For years, nonprofit organizations on both sides of the border have stepped up to this challenge. The San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter Services, operated by Jewish Family Service of San Diego, has welcomed over 110,000 people since October 2018 – providing respite shelter, case management, legal support, financial and travel assistance, and more. California has developed a model of collaboration between community based organizations and all levels of government, we now need the federal government to allocate adequate resources to support a humane response and welcome.”

Margaret Cargioli, Directing Attorney, Litigation and Advocacy, Immigrant Defenders Law Center:

“People seeking safety and protection should not be feared, our response should be to welcome them and provide access to life-saving resources. We are ready to help

asylum seekers through their immigration process along with our partners at the border, and we are prepared to work in partnership with local, state, and federal governments to provide them with high quality legal services. After Title 42 ends, elected officials must work with border organizations to fund a coordinated response to keep families together and keep people safe. We call on the Biden Administration and Congress to renew dignity and due process to our asylum system. We must respect asylum law and the inherent humanity of all human beings.”

Pedro Rios, US-Mexico Border Program Director, American Friends Service Committee:

“The promise of asylum is an enshrined right under federal law and international agreements meant to respond to tyranny and despair that forces thousands of people to flee their home countries. The United States undermines that promise every day that Title 42 remains in place, and it endangers the lives of those seeking shelter from harm. We call on the Biden Administration to reject efforts that undermine the right to asylum, including its own proposals to adopt anti-asylum measures that will foment a disdain of asylum seekers. It must proactively work with, and provide resources to, local, state, and civil society organizations to respond to the humanitarian needs of asylum seekers.”

Andrea Guerrero, Executive Director of Alliance San Diego:

"It is imperative that the Biden administration uphold our human rights obligations to provide access to asylum for people persecuted in their home countries. Access to asylum is embedded in the international treaties that the United States is a party to and, more fundamentally, it is a sacred duty to protect human life. Defying our sacred obligations now would open the door for other administrations and other countries to do the same, unraveling the international protections that the world of nations worked so hard to put in place following World War II. Asylum was declared then and is now a non-derogable human right that under no circumstances should be forsaken. To do so now would be to forswear the most solemn oath we have — to protect one another. We encourage and welcome meaningful engagement with civil society to protect and rebuild the asylum system."

Isa Peña, Director of Strategy for Innovation Law Lab:

“The cruel irony of the U.S. government’s antagonistic posture towards people seeking asylum is that many people are fleeing dire conditions that were caused or

exacerbated in part by U.S. foreign economic and political policy. The U.S. must end its long history of interventionism and support for governments with terrible human rights records that put extractive corporate interests over those of the wellbeing of people. As long as the U.S. continues supporting governments and policies that create violent and desperate situations for people, those people will be forcibly displaced and seek refuge, including in the United States. And we should always strive to make the U.S. an inclusive, welcoming and equitable place for all.”

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The **California Welcoming Task Force** is a binational coalition dedicated to re-envisioning how the U.S. can welcome people seeking asylum safely and expeditiously at our border by coordinating across sectors (humanitarian & health, legal, advocacy and communications). More info at www.rapidresponsesd.org/cawtf