



California Welcoming Task Force Reacts to Biden Executive Order on Asylum

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SAN DIEGO (June 4, 2024) – Today, the [California Welcoming Task Force](#) (CAWTF), a binational coalition dedicated to re-imagining how the U.S. can welcome people seeking asylum safely, condemned President Biden’s executive order effectively sealing the U.S. border to those seeking asylum.

This executive action, which takes effect immediately, will give U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) unilateral power over the next 14 days to deport people who enter the U.S. outside of border checkpoints without processing their asylum claims. This draconian border closure will then be triggered every time CBP encounters an average of 2,500 people per day – a completely arbitrary number – between ports of entry across seven days. The measure is only lifted after there has been a week-long average of less than 1,500 encounters between ports of entry, which essentially means this border closure will be indefinite. Anyone removed under this order will be barred from entering the U.S. for five years.

Alarming, this executive order mirrors the Trump-era Title 42 rule, effectively sanctioning the removal of people seeking asylum from the country before they even get an interview with immigration officials. This strips newcomers of their constitutional due process rights, including the right to be heard in court. The order’s new, extremely stringent standards for credible fear interviews will deny many people their legal and human right to seek asylum in the United States.

The CAWTF calls upon the Biden administration to immediately reverse this executive action, and instead work toward restoring access to asylum at our nation’s border and creating a more fair, effective and timely asylum system. Closing our borders to people in need is completely unacceptable, unnecessary and inhumane.

The San Diego-Mexico border is currently the location with the highest number of arrivals of children and adults seeking asylum in the United States. The work that the members of the CAWTF do every day to welcome people seeking asylum proves that there are solutions that work.

Since its inception, the coalition has advocated for improved infrastructure and more staff to process people seeking asylum at the southern border, which would be vastly more effective than deterrence-only measures. In particular, CAWTF believes the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

should prioritize staffing and resources to increase the number of available CBP One asylum appointments that allow families and individuals to enter the United States at ports of entry. Increasing access to asylum at ports of entry would help prevent loss of life and life-threatening injuries that occur from more dangerous routes to safety.

“Seeking asylum is a human right protected under both international and U.S. laws. Biden’s executive order breaks his 2020 campaign promise to restore asylum and will cause unjust harm to vulnerable families and individuals,” said **Felicia Gomez, immigrants’ rights senior policy advocate at the ACLU Foundation of San Diego & Imperial Counties**. “Instead of using people seeking asylum as bargaining chips for political gains, we need elected leaders to protect the right to asylum and invest in community-driven solutions that welcome newcomers with dignity, respect and humanity.”

“It’s incredibly disappointing that this administration made this decision without a clear understanding of the true risk and suffering on the ground in addition to the operational impact of this policy. In the recent past, the San Diego Sector has processed the highest number of people seeking asylum in the nation at our border crossing, and we assist many of them at the San Diego Rapid Response Network Migrant Shelter Services before they are reunited with their loved ones across the country,” said **Kate Clark, Esq., senior director of immigration services at Jewish Family Service of San Diego**. “We know from experience that punitive actions like this executive order will do nothing to solve the humanitarian crisis at our borders. We need all levels of government to come together to aid and increase safe pathways for people fleeing violence and persecution and in the immediate future increase numbers being processed through ports of entry.”

“President Biden’s executive order is a dangerous pivot towards dismantling any access to asylum and goes against our nation’s values,” said **Jordan Cunnings, legal director at Innovation Law Lab**. “Rather than addressing the profound deficiencies in our immigration system, the Biden Administration is forcing individuals who have fled unspeakable horrors and traveled thousands of miles to return to the dangers and persecution they desperately sought to escape—without a meaningful opportunity to seek the asylum protections that our nation’s laws guarantee.”

“The administration continues to revert to failed border policies that slam the door in the face of those seeking protection for political gain,” said **Lindsay Toczyłowski, executive director of Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)**. “Nothing has been gained by these political ploys. The Biden administration must focus on effective solutions that uphold due process in the immigration system and end fragmented and counterproductive measures that undercut justice for asylum seekers. Now is the time to implement humane and effective border processing upgrades instead of doubling down on deterrence-based policies that fail asylum seekers and refugees as well as betray our values as a nation. We implore the Biden administration to forge a path forward with solutions like increased lawful pathways, and veer away from the inhumane and illegal policies of the Trump era.”

“Tilting right to appease those who have remained steadfast opponents of any migration to the United States is wrong,” said **Angelica Salas, executive director for CHIRLA (The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights)**. “These policies increase the suffering of many who seek lifesaving protection and the harm that will result from the implementation of this executive order for many is irreversible. The border restrictions proposed in this executive order do not address the situation at our border or the

conditions that force migrants to leave their home countries. It is truly a sad day for the United States when it has become so expedient to disregard the plight of human beings for political gain. We will fight tooth and nail to stop this executive order from going into effect and to reverse all other anti-asylum policies already doing damage to the right to seek refuge.”

“Biden's executive order is a clear violation of both federal and international law protecting the rights of refugees to seek safety at our borders,” said **Erika Pinheiro, executive director of Al Otro Lado**. “Similar policies enacted by Trump demonstrated that this order will fail to deter asylum seekers; rather, it will only cause suffering and death, as legitimate refugees will be unable to access protection. Despite claims that this order will ‘shut down the border,’ it could take weeks or months for the Department of Homeland Security to effectuate some removals, which could overwhelm Border Patrol's capacity and lead to further chaos. In 2020, Biden campaigned on a promise to rebuild the US asylum system and enact more humane immigration policies, but instead has dehumanized and criminalized migrants in an attempt to score political points. It is unlikely that this move will help Biden gain additional votes; instead, it will only further alienate his base and incite violence against immigrant communities.”

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 and health, legal, advocacy and communications). More info. at www.rapidresponsesd.org/cawtf.

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Interviews readily available.

CAWTF Media Contacts: Sandy Young, sandy@jwalcher.com

Molly Pincherli, molly@jwalcher.com

Melissa Flores, melissa@alotrolado.org