



## **Joint Statement on the Migration Crisis in Central America**

Issued on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018

By: Representatives from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico.

The Alliance for the Protection of Children, an Initiative of Faith-Based Communities and Organizations in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, sympathizes with its migrant sisters and brothers, mainly from Honduras and El Salvador, who are fleeing from persecution, violence and violation of their basic human rights, and pays special attention to the situation of children.

Over the past month, the world has witnessed a massive exodus of thousands of migrants from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, grouped in caravans, the first of which started in Honduras. This sad situation reflects the state at which people are denied their rights to the extent of fleeing from their home countries.

These caravans represent the frustration of families that lack of access to adequate food, quality education, decent employment opportunities, health, safety, the right to live in peace instead of an environment of violence and insecurity, and many other challenges that people of the Central American region face; it is an urgent cry to change the socio-economic conditions of inequity and injustice.

Governments of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and the United States of America need to recognize that the grave situation of poverty, marginalization and exclusion in which high percentages of the population of these countries live in, is related to violence and long-lasting conflicts which deeply affected the development of these countries and their social fabric. There is a historical debt that needs to be addressed through structural measures.

Corruption, lack of transparency and lack of measures to protect such populations are just some of the failures of the Governments that have focused more on the security of their borders than on the protection of their population. In some cases, the caravans have even been deprived of their right to free movement within the region, in violation of the CA4 Agreement.

On their way through Guatemala and Mexico, the caravans have seen the solidarity of many people and institutions that spontaneously have reached out to them, as well as of

many institutions and civil society organizations that are responding to this emergency situation, but not of their national governments from which they have not received any humane treatment based on the minimum international protection standards.

In this regard:

- We express our solidarity to all the people who are part of caravans; an exodus that reflects the crisis in the region, especially to the many girls and boys of all ages who are on the road with their families or unaccompanied;
- We urge all people and communities of faith in the countries involved in this migration crisis to act in accordance to the principles of caring for people in need and welcoming the stranger, and to raise their voices in front of situations of injustice;
- We call on the governments of the countries of transit and destination, in particular the government of the United States of America, to:
  - Respect the rights of migrants and not return them to the territory from which they are fleeing, without the full guarantee of their rights to life, protection, security, health, education, and other fundamental human rights.
  - Provide humanitarian assistance with a differentiated approach to protect children, young people, women, people with disabilities, the elderly and the LGBTI population.
  - Respect the right to migrate and to freedom of movement, and to not detain people, especially children and adolescents, in migration detention centres, particularly when those places do not meet the minimum conditions of humanity and dignity. Family unit must be preserved at all times and child protection mechanisms established in an effective manner.
- We ask the society, the governments and the media not to criminalize the right to migration, and to provide complete and truthful information, so that the population of these countries understands the situation and mobilizes in their support. We condemn all violent, xenophobic and discriminatory narratives, and reaffirm the need for expressions of solidarity, welcome and love, and for promoting integration.
- We ask the governments of Mexico and Guatemala to provide clear and precise information about the asylum processes for those who need to apply to this measure.
- We reaffirm the importance of listening to children and adolescents on the move, their concerns and needs, and of establishing safe and friendly spaces to protect them from violence and to promote their resilience and recovery.
- We request the United Nations, through UNHCR, IOM and other agencies and programs, and the Organization of American States to ensure and guarantee the respect for the rights of people on the move.
- We call on the governments of Central America to address the root causes of this migration crisis, through working for socio-economic structures that guarantee the minimum standards and conditions in the area of nutrition, education, employment, health and security, and through increasing social investment in children, so that their

populations do not seek migration as a way to guarantee their survival, dignity and the fulfillment of human rights.

- We encourage the migrant population of the caravans not to feel alone. God continues to accompany their steps and we, as faith communities, accompany them with our prayers and actions.
- We reiterate our willingness to continue working together as faith-based organizations and communities, and in partnership with other secular institutions, civil society organizations, governments and other actors, to build bridges of trust, strengthen our actions and protect the rights of migrants, in particular children and adolescents.

### **About the Alliance for the Protection of Children**

The Alliance for the Protection of Children is an initiative of faith-based organizations and communities concerned about the levels of violence in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico, and their impact on the lives of children. The Alliance aims at maximizing the potential for advocacy and mobilization of faith communities to protect children from violence, and re-establish the rights to the victims, through collective work of faith-based organizations in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. The Alliance is made up of a Regional Coordinating Committee and 4 National Committees, one in each country of the sub-region.