

Faith-Based Principles for Immigration Reform

The following common principles or affirmations emerge from our respective faith traditions and teachings, and may serve to guide our thinking and action around migration and immigration issues:

I. All persons have the right to find opportunities that will allow them to live in dignity in their homeland.

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, religious and social opportunities to live in dignity, provide for their families, and achieve a full life through the use of the gifts bestowed upon them.

II. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families if they are unable to do so in their own countries.

Our traditions recognize that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to migrate elsewhere to find work in order to survive. Our traditions also recognize the right of sovereign nations to control their territories and impose reasonable limits on immigration. In the current conditions of widespread global poverty and persecution, however, the more powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their own residents, have an obligation to accommodate migration flows whenever possible.

III. Those fleeing violence and persecution should be afforded protection.

Those who flee wars and persecution, as many people from our own faith traditions have been forced to do throughout history, should be protected by the global community. This requires that migrants be allowed to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their asylum claims fully considered by a competent authority.

IV. The human dignity and human rights of all migrants should be respected.

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. As such, they must not be subjected to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers in the receiving or transit countries nor to exploitation by employers. We must seek policies to safeguard the rights and inherent dignity of all migrants, particularly the undocumented, including their rights as workers.

V. Family unity among migrant and immigrant families should be protected and upheld.

Our faith traditions are also deeply rooted in the sanctity of the family. As such, we are concerned that all efforts be made to allow immigrants to be reunited with their families in a safe and legal manner.

VI. Our traditions call on us to welcome the stranger among us.

All of our faith traditions and teachings promote hospitality toward the migrant, the refugees, and the exiled in our communities.

March 18, 2004: Multi-Faith Border Conference, Tucson, AZ

April 19, 2004: Arizona Interfaith Network Convocation on Immigration, Phoenix, AZ