



FOR MIGRATION GOVERNANCE CENTERED ON HUMAN DIGNITY

In the framework of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), Catholic faith-based organizations and pastoral actors from Latin America and the Caribbean raise our voices from the communities where we accompany migrants, refugees, returnees, and forcibly displaced people.

Our position is clear: **human dignity is not negotiable.**

Day after day, we see that migration governance in the region is facing setbacks in human rights. There is a structural gap between the commitments States have made under the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the reality experienced by thousands of people on the move across our continent—especially when it comes to reducing vulnerabilities, access to international protection, non-discrimination, and ensuring safe and dignified returns.

Policies focused on control, containment, securitization, and the externalization of borders have not stopped migration; they have made it more dangerous. These dynamics have normalized violence and dehumanization, disproportionately affecting women, girls, boys, and adolescents.

We denounce with deep concern the human impact of these policies:

- Family separation due to detention and deportation, often without due process;
- People deported without support networks or means to survive;
- People transferred to third countries where they have no ties, do not know the language, and lack even basic conditions for integration;
- Children and adolescents exposed to trafficking networks, smuggling, and violence;
- The criminalization of people in forced mobility.

We are alarmed by how anti-immigrant, criminalizing, and anti-poor discrimination narratives have spread across public debate in the region. These narratives have helped legitimize policies that prioritize security and control over human dignity and human rights, encouraging practices such as profiling, arbitrary detention, and excessive use of force.

We are also concerned about the steady increase in funding for containment and control policies—such as building walls, expanding detention systems, and militarizing migration management—while resources for humanitarian assistance, international protection, and integration and reintegration programs are being reduced. This trend reflects priorities that deepen exclusion.

As faith-based organizations, we walk alongside migrants, living out the call of Pope Francis to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate. However, we are clear: **our work cannot and should not replace the responsibility of States.** Guaranteeing and protecting the life, dignity, and rights of migrants is both a legal and ethical obligation.



From the Social Doctrine of the Church, we reaffirm that human dignity is the foundation of all political action. As *Fratelli Tutti* reminds us, no one can be discarded. And as Pope Leo XIV states in his encyclical *Dilexi Te* (73–75), migration is part of human history and challenges us to denounce systems of exclusion and to propose alternatives that humanize migration governance.

We reiterate the importance of strengthening the complementarity between international and regional protection frameworks, including the Cartagena +40 Process, and of advancing toward regional cooperation based on solidarity, shared protection, and shared responsibility among States. Fulfilling these commitments is urgent, especially in a context where their implementation faces risks of stagnation and regression in international law.

The 2026 International Migration Review Forum must not be limited to a technical assessment. Its legitimacy will depend on States' real capacity to close the gap between commitments and reality.

For this reason, we urgently call on States to:

- Guarantee the right to migrate through safe, regular, and accessible pathways;
- Respect the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement;
- End the widespread use of immigration detention;
- Ensure due process in all migration procedures;
- Guarantee safe, dignified, and voluntary returns, supported by public policies for sustainable reintegration that rebuild family and community networks;
- Ensure transparency in agreements on externalization, containment, and deportation;
- Strengthen regional cooperation based on human rights and shared responsibility;
- Include migrants and refugees, as well as faith-based and civil society organizations, as strategic partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of migration policies;
- Allocate sustainable funding for protection, integration, and reintegration, prioritizing investment in human rights over control and containment policies.

Finally, we call for effectively addressing the structural causes of forced migration—geopolitical dynamics, inequality, violence, and the impacts of climate change and socio-environmental disasters—through prevention, protection, and adaptation policies that guarantee the right of people and communities to remain in dignified living conditions in their own territories.

The message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, “Even just one of these little ones,” reminds us that we are not talking about numbers, but about human lives—where every person matters, every story matters, and every life is sacred.

For this reason, we urge States and the international community to build bridges rather than walls; to take on their shared responsibility; and to truly place human dignity at the center of migration governance.



Signatories

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