

A Faith Leaders' Statement on Immigration

To endorse this statement, please email liza.lieberman@hias.org.
Please include your name, title, church/organization, affiliation, location, e-mail.

As the leaders of different faith groups and denominations across the country, are gravely concerned with the current political and policy environment surrounding the issue of immigration. We are troubled by signs that our nation is turning away from reforming our nation's immigration system and is instead pursuing enforcement policies which are ineffective and inhumane.

Enforcement raids, state and local anti-immigrant ordinances, and harmful rhetoric against immigrants are just a few of the signs that our nation is moving away from civil discourse and toward discord and division. As a result, immigrant families are being separated and immigrant and ethnic groups targeted, creating a climate of fear in all of our communities.

Now is the time to restart the debate on immigration reform and develop fair, balanced, and humane solutions to immigration. We offer the following principles to help guide our country in reaffirming our identity as a nation which welcomes immigrants and believes that the best of America is shown in how we treat those who come to our shores:

Anti-immigrant rhetoric has no place in public discourse and should not be used. As a country, we value civil public discourse as the reasonable way to address our problems and arrive at solutions. Inflammatory statements and dehumanizing categorizations of any person or people, e.g. "illegals", should be stricken in favor of factual and more accurate descriptions of the people adversely affected by our broken immigration system.

Elected officials should examine all aspects of our immigration system. Examining and reforming only one aspect of our immigration system—such as enforcement---will not meet the challenges we face. The legal immigration system, both employment and family-based, must also be reformed.

Reform of our laws should restore the rule of law and secure our borders. Current immigration law is severely flawed and thus must be corrected in order to re-establish the rule of law. As a sovereign nation has the right to secure its border, any reform should ensure that our country's borders are secure from outside threats.

Reform of our laws must respect the human dignity of the person. The adoption of new laws must be measured by their ability to uphold basic human dignity. Any proposals which can lead to an abuse of human dignity and human rights must include safeguards to protect against such violations.

Reform of our laws must protect family unity. Proposals should ensure that families are kept together, to the greatest extent possible, and that children and youth, particularly, are afforded special protection. Too often our immigration laws lead to the disintegration of the family unit and the abandonment of children.

We commit ourselves to working with our own faith communities and others to foster constructive and respectful dialogue on this important national issue. As faith leaders, we will work to ensure that immigrants are treated with respect and dignity. We will speak out and educate our communities about the value of immigrants and the important contributions they make to our lives, while fostering a climate for constructive and civil dialogue on this important national issue.

We also urge our elected officials and all persons of good will to work together to find solutions which uphold the moral fabric of our nation, protect the dignity and human rights of all persons, and restore and maintain the rule of law.

As a nation of immigrants, we must remember our heritage and return to those values which have helped build our great nation—fairness, justice, opportunity, and compassion.

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