

## Statement of Faith Leaders on the Morality of a Border Wall

In his recent State of the Union (SOTU) address, President Trump stated that his quest to build a wall along the US-Mexico border was moral. In a previous Oval Office address on the subject, he suggested that those who oppose the construction of a wall were taking an immoral position.

We strongly disagree with these statements and believe just the opposite. In our view, a border wall which denies bona fide asylum-seekers from entering the country in search of protection—their right under domestic and international law—is immoral.

The majority of persons coming to the southern border are asylum-seekers, many of whom are women and children from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. They are no threat to U.S. citizens and are themselves fleeing persecution and violence in their countries. A wall would keep them in danger, subjecting them to harm by drug cartels, smugglers, and human traffickers.

They, along with other migrants who are searching for work to support their families, would be driven by a wall into more remote regions of the border in an attempt to reach safety, at risk of losing their lives. When a wall was constructed in the San Diego area in the mid-1990s, for example, migrants were driven to the desert of Arizona and other remote regions in order to cross the border. According to U.S. Border Patrol statistics, over 8,000 migrants died in these areas from 1998-2016.

We acknowledge the right of a sovereign nation to control its borders to ensure the security of its citizenry. However, border enforcement must protect and preserve the human rights and human life of all persons, regardless of their legal status.

History has shown that border walls constructed to restrict human rights, such as the Berlin Wall, cause harm to human beings, all of whom possess God-given rights and are equal to us in the eyes of God. Because of this injustice, they eventually come down.

We agree with President Trump that there is a humanitarian challenge at our border, but erecting a wall would only exacerbate the situation, not solve it. Instead of fixating on a wall, the administration should ensure that people seeking safety can access our asylum system and address the push factors driving migration, policies which are more humane, and, in the long-term, more effective. The president also should focus on reforming the immigration system in a manner that is humane, just, and reflects American values.

As such, we strongly oppose a border wall and the declaration of a national emergency and transfer of funds to construct it. As a nation, we should build bridges, not walls, and remain a safe haven for the persecuted and downtrodden of the world.

Signatories:

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