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The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
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November 23, 2018

Dear Prime Minister,

As Jesuit Provincial of Canada, I would like to express my concern regarding the situation of the Honduran and Central American migrants who have been walking for weeks towards the United States' southern border. On behalf of my Jesuit brothers and the Jesuit institutions who work for migrants and refugees, I request that the Canadian government actively contribute to finding solutions to this current humanitarian crisis and take some concrete actions of hospitality towards these people whose lives and human dignity are in peril.

On November 9th, the President of the United States signed a Presidential proclamation that would eliminate the right of refugee claimants to make a refugee claim if they were to cross the border irregularly. He also declared on many occasions that the migrants represent a threat to national security. This decision, these declarations and the imposing military presence at the border are worrisome. They are important violations of the Geneva Convention on the status of refugees (notably articles 31 and 33) that condemn the criminalization of irregular arrivals and requires that refugee claimants not be considered a threat to a country's national security without proof.

The information we receive from our Jesuit partners at the American border demonstrates that it is extremely difficult for these migrants to arrive at official border entry points; when they do, the process and the delays they come up against completely undermine their right to protection. My Jesuit brothers from the migrants' countries of origin, notably from Honduras (please see attached the letter from Father Ismael Moreno) bear witness to the fact that the said caravans are composed of a great number of children, women and men who are fleeing hardship and oppression in their country of origin. These conditions they flee are even more dangerous than the enormous risk they take by walking all this way to find a bit of hope.

The Canadian government cannot remain silent in the face of this tragedy, especially considering its share of responsibility in it. Notably, it has recognized and supported the Honduran government stemming from fraudulent elections, which is responsible for the growing repression against the Honduran people. Furthermore, it continues to delay the naming of an ombudsman for Canadian mining companies and the putting in place of a mechanism to oversee them. The mining companies also hold some great responsibility in the insecurity, the poverty and the deterioration of the living environments from which the migrants come.

We believe that it is urgent that the Canadian government show leadership in the region by working with their American and Mexican counterparts in order to find a solution to protect the migrants who are currently requesting protection and to not tolerate any violation of their dignity or rights. In the context of this process, Canada must also act hospitably and do its part by offering asylum to some of the migrants.

In a more long-term perspective, it would be important that you name as soon as possible an ombudsman who can investigate the abuse done by Canadian mining companies. And finally, Canada must contribute to the improvement of the living conditions in these countries, mainly by condemning the repressive political and economic measures that affect the population.

Be assured, Mister Prime Minister, of our deepest consideration and gratitude for the acts of hospitality that the government takes for our migrant brothers and sisters from Central America.



Erik Oland, Provincial
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