



NNiRR

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

El Paso, TX +1.915.257.5360

Oakland, CA +1.510.465.1984

nnirinfo@nnirr.org

THE HONORABLE JOSEPH BIDEN
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

CC: SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS
Department of Homeland Security

September 22, 2021

**An Open Letter on the Treatment of Haitian and other Migrants
at the U.S.-Mexico Border.**

Dear President Biden,

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) strongly condemns the widespread, unlawful, and violent mistreatment of migrants in Del Rio, Texas, and other migration corridors. Recent video footage broadcast on national news showed U.S. Border Patrol agents on horseback, wielding long reins and chasing Black migrants, who are mostly from Haiti. These disturbing images are in addition to the Biden administration's decision to continue to exclude and deport thousands of asylum seekers in violation of U.S. and international laws.

The Biden administration and U.S. Congress must take immediate action to grant humanitarian parole to Haitian and other migrants seeking asylum. Moreover, the Biden administration must immediately open an independent investigation of the U.S. Border Patrol's racist and abusive practices.

The Haitian crisis at Del Rio is the same human rights crisis that border communities have experienced for decades. Black and Indigenous migrants have endured long-standing human rights violations resulting from border enforcement policies and practices. The U.S. government has given free rein to abusive border policing agencies – specifically the Border Patrol – to [detain, assault, and shoot migrants and border residents](#), underscored by the reliance on racial profiling and a goal of immigration deterrence. For years, racial profiling has been widely used

to question, detain, stop and frisk people who are “suspicious” – an assault on the dignity and integrity of Black and Brown people residing or migrating at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The immigration deterrence strategy – with its heightened enforcement operations along the Central American/North American migration corridor has dominated U.S. immigration policy for decades. Enhanced following 9/11 twenty years ago, this strategy has fueled deadly consequences for migrants and asylum seekers from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, as well as for African and other migrants who transit [through these corridors](#). As the barbaric media images have depicted, and further reports have documented, Black and Indigenous migrants [experience deeply troubling patterns of violence](#) and vulnerabilities due to racially-charged immigration enforcement policies and practices.

Over decades, the U.S. has heavily invested in the immigration deterrence infrastructure – greatly increasing the number of Border Patrol agents, surveillance technology, and border walls to the detriment of supporting an effective asylum and immigration processing system to facilitate migration needs and flows. These enforcement policies and practices have pushed migrants and asylum seekers into highly dangerous migration routes and more vulnerable situations, directly contributing to an [alarming loss of migrant lives](#).

We urge your Administration to do everything it can to end this humanitarian and human rights crisis. The U.S. must abide by its international human rights commitments, specifically the 1951 Refugee Convention and its protocols, and adhere to pertinent human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Earlier this year, U.S. representatives had indicated their support for the UN’s Global Compact for Migration – an encouraging mechanism to pursue “safe, orderly and regular migration” while protecting the human rights of all migrants. The United States has the capacity and responsibility to provide a rights-based response to this humanitarian crisis. We urge your Administration to exert its will to uphold its commitments and obligations under international agreements and U.S. laws.

In light of the scale and severity of the situation at the Del Rio and other ports of entry, we call upon the Administration and the U.S. Congress to prioritize the safety and protection of human rights of all migrants and refugees. This includes:

- Stopping all deportations of Haitian migrants and others seeking asylum. Uphold the principle of non-refoulement, and not return them to a country they had fled because of its dangerous, life-threatening conditions.
- Granting immediate humanitarian parole to Haitian asylum-seekers at the border and others seeking refuge, and allowing them to process their asylum claims on the U.S. side of the border.

- Conducting a prompt and thorough investigation of Border Patrol abuses and racially motivated practices, against Black migrants and refugees, as well as Mexican and Central American migrants.
- Ending Title 42 and ensuring due process rights for all asylum seekers and migrants.
- Establishing an independent and civilian oversight body to investigate human rights abuses, practices, and operating procedures of U.S. immigration enforcement agencies.
- Halting and reviewing immigration deterrence and containment agreements with Central American countries to ensure compliance with international human rights commitments.
- Establishing effective partnerships with human rights, civil rights, and community-based organizations to help ameliorate the human rights crisis resulting from the escalation of militarized immigration enforcement operations on the borderlands.

Sincerely,

Alma Maquitico, Co-Director

Jennifer Ferrigno, Co-Director

Board of Directors of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)