



Jesuit Migration Network- Central America and North America

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY — NOVEMBER 2020

*Contexts and commitments that move us*

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## From the South of Central America to the North of Mexico: Communities that resist a prolonged red alert

**“They journey in search of a better future.”** In the Jesuit Migration Network, we’ve distanced ourselves from this trite affirmation which does not reflect the grave crises that face our countries today. What thousands of people are searching for, in spite of the brutal risks, is the opportunity to *have a future*, any future, even one that seems uncertain and marked by uprootedness.

In the last year, those who have faced the urgent need to flee far from their homelands could not have imagined that a pandemic would whip their backs with more force than the blows suffered by those who had passed through the travesty of the migration route in the past. COVID-19 has left thousands of asylum seekers stranded in limbo, without the basic minimum of protection and humanitarian aid, without being able to return to their countries of origin, and without being able to continue their journey.

The crises in the northern and southern borders of Mexico, on the borders of Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua have demonstrated the absence of the State, and the complete lack of interest in guaranteeing respect for the human rights of people forced to migrate in the context of a global health crisis. We could also refer to the drama unfolding in migrant detention centers in the United States and Mexico, which continue barring the way for women, men, and children without offering them any options other than deportation. All the while, those detained are at a high risk of contracting the virus during their internment.

As if all that were not enough, just a few weeks ago, Central American countries and many communities in the south of Mexico were victims of new natural disasters caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota. There are no indications that government authorities will respond adequately to the destruction. Instead, they deny the scope of tragedy, reallocate the funds for relief, or simply do not have the minimum ability to respond.



## Optimism for Biden and Harris?

Central America and Mexico face systematic crises that make it impossible to construct viable responses to the problems that overwhelm the majority of the population. At the same time, and this is of not a matter of secondary importance for our countries, in the United States Joe Biden and Kamala Harris won the presidential election.

The new administration in the White House has promised to reestablish the executive orders that marked the few advances for the regularization of the immigrant population, such as the dreamers and people under TPS. It has also committed to restore the systems of asylum and refuge, to study each deportation order and evaluate due process, and to consider the situation of children whose interests and protection have not been properly guaranteed.

These are important steps. The challenges in going forward for the President-Elect related to immigration are enormous; not only in order to keep the campaign promises, but also to achieve the consensus necessary in the Senate to pass (short or medium term) immigration reform. There is also the challenge to create more just policies that impact human rights in Central Americas. We need to keep our expectations measured and collaboratively act to continue denouncing, proposing, and attending to the people in need.

## Our commitments as JMN-CA&NA

In the Jesuit Migration Network Central America and North America, we know that the current dynamics are complex, convulsive and even disheartening, but that is no reason to step aside and give in to pessimism. At the center of our work are the people, all those people who have nurtured us throughout the years; the people that cry, but also embrace, sustain, and fight on. **We therefore reiterate four unshakeable commitments:**

**FIRST.** Keep walking alongside people fighting to survive forced migration in their struggle to save their lives, demand their rights, and to see their dreams of a life with dignity come true; either in a new country or with the possibility of a safe and voluntary return to their country with opportunities for the future.

**SECOND.** Work to promote the recognition that our societies are interdependent, and are based on values like hospitality, solidarity, and respect for all living creatures. That we are a diverse and enthusiastic body of people, capable of contributing to all the areas of life. That we can “*migrar hacia lo extraordinario*” (“migrate towards the extraordinary”), not in an individualistic sense, but from the collective desire and effort to shift the paradigm, so that we can be recognized as beings in movement and deserving of rights.

**THIRD.** Along with other organized national and international efforts, collaborate in processes that focus on confronting the root causes of forced migration in Central America and Mexico. Our

responsibility is to add our voice to denunciations of abuses, as well as to clear proposals for the formation of political subjects, the promotion education and the creation of opportunities, claiming rights for women and the environment, among other things. There are many fronts, but we need **to opt for concrete, long-term, and, most importantly, interconnected actions.**

**FOURTH.** Consider and promote **new ways of understanding the particularities of refuge, forced migration and other forms of displacement.** The profound changes over the last decades call for us to identify new categories and concepts for non-voluntary human mobility. We want to strengthen the efforts for policy change in the United States and other countries characterized by the South-to-South migration, such as Costa Rica and Panama. That the laws on migration may truly be coherent, taking into account both the most pressing current human needs and the unconditional respect for human rights.