We, Long Island People of Faith,
Denounce and Condemn the Mass Deportation of Immigrants

Eleven million undocumented immigrants – almost 90,000 here on Long Island – now live each day in terror, fearing deportation. Two Long Island brothers, Jose and Josue Trejo Lopez, 19 and 20, were recently arrested by ICE at their immigration check-in and rapidly deported in chains to El Salvador despite having called the United States their home since ages 9 and 10, and having complied with required immigration office check-ins. Neither has a criminal record.[1]

Who Are We? This is not who we are as Americans. This is not who we are as people of faith. Our religious traditions, founded on the belief in human dignity, with special care for poor, marginalized and vulnerable people, cry out for a response:

> Exodus 23: 9
> "*You must not oppress the stranger; you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt*."
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> Matthew 25: 35-40
> "*For I was a stranger and you made me welcome; . . . I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me*."
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> Quran, Verse 16:41
> *And those who became (refugees) … after they had been oppressed. We verily shall give them goodly lodging in the world…*
>
> 40th Annual General Meeting of the European Buddhist Union
> "*Seeing our fundamental interconnectedness with all beings, we recognize the 'refugees', 'migrants' and 'asylum-seekers' now streaming into Europe as people like ourselves, desperately seeking relief from suffering and longing for happiness*.".

As people of faith, we denounce, we condemn, the current United States mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, many of whom have fled extreme violence and poverty in their native lands. We are a nation of immigrants. Many of our ancestors fled similar conditions and upon arrival here worked hard to give their families a new life, building railroads and businesses, working in factories and farms, schools and hospitals. Immigration is the great and inspiring story of this nation

What We See. Immigrants are still making America great. But, a new generation of immigrants, the vast majority with no criminal records[2], are being pulled from their

[1] Jones, Bart. "Long Island brothers deported after immigration check in," Newsday, May 16,2025

[2] A National Institute of Justice-funded study examining data from the Texas Department of Public Safety

workplaces and families, and sent away – without basic due process rights – sometimes in open defiance of court orders. Individuals are often targeted not for their actions, but because of racial profiling tied to their ethnicity, language, or appearance. These are unprecedented oppressive government policies that obstruct the rule of law and undermine the humanitarian values and Constitutional protections that have historically defined us as a people.

Undocumented Long island immigrants, who attend our religious services, who often work in low-wage jobs that native-born Americans refuse to do, while paying $1 billion in state and local taxes[3], whose children now tremble that their parents or they themselves will be taken away, call us to speak and to act on their behalf.

Our many religious agencies, food pantries and outreach centers are on the front lines of the mass deportations. They hear the stories of fear and intimidation. They offer workshops on how families can prepare if the parents are taken from their children. They try to locate legal counsel when their immigrant neighbors are arrested at court hearings, or workplaces, on the streets or in front of their homes. They watch as immigrants forego medical visits to clinics for fear of arrest, thereby endangering their own and the community's health. They counsel and console amid the oppression.

Oppression Demands Action. In the 1930s, Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer told his fellow Germans, in the face of oppression, "not to speak is to speak, not to act is to act." It is our time to speak and to act.

Immigrants are here without documentation largely because our broken immigration laws have prevented them from entering the U.S. legally, as millions of earlier immigrants did when American laws welcomed them. For over thirty years, Congress has been unable or unwilling to repair our immigration laws which is why we are in the current legal, political and humanitarian crisis.

Even so, in our criminal-justice system, crossing the border without legal authorization is a misdemeanor, not a felony. It surely does not require that a person with no criminal record be deported without a trial to an infamous prison in El Salvador, as was Kilmar Abrego Garcia this past March.[4] And while government officials brand the deportees as "savages," reports showed that of the 238 immigrants deported with Mr.

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found that undocumented immigrants are arrested at less than half the rate of native-born U.S. citizens for violent and drug crimes and a quarter the rate of native-born citizens for property crimes. National Institute of Justice, September 12, 2024.

[3] https://immresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Long-Island-Fact-Sheet-2023-1.pdf

[4] SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, No. 24A949, KRISTI NOEM, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, ET AL. v. KILMAR ARMANDO ABREGO GARCIA, ET AL .ON APPLICATION TO VACATE INJUNCTION ENTERED BY THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND [April 10, 2025] "To this day, the Government has cited no basis in law for Abrego Garcia's warrantless arrest, his removal to El Salvador, or his confinement in a Salvadoran prison. Nor could it."

Garcia to El Salvador, “only 32 of the deportees had been convicted of U.S. crimes and that most were nonviolent offenses, such as retail theft or traffic violations.”[5]

On June 6th, after three months of U.S. government resistance with both public and media protests supporting Mr. Garcia, he was returned to the United States to face a trial on new charges brought against him by the Justice Department – human trafficking. This time he will get a trial, unlike most if not all of the other 237 immigrants deported with him in March to the notorious Salvadoran prison.

Not content with deporting undocumented immigrants, the government recently revoked the legal Temporary Protective Status and Humanitarian Parole Status of 1 million immigrants with the stroke of a pen, making them “illegal” and thus subject to deportation. Yader Salgado, sexton at Trinity Episcopal Church in Northport, received a letter in late March from the United States Department of Homeland Security informing him that his enrollment in the United States humanitarian parole program had been revoked and he, his wife and two children would have to leave the country by April 24th.[6]

This terror must stop.

A Call for Compassion. While we represent diverse religious traditions, we are one with the Creator of all that is good, in calling Long Islanders and all Americans to be healers amid this hatred, to live what Abraham Lincoln described as the “better angels of our nature”:

- Building bridges among peoples, not walls that divide them and us;
- Welcoming asylum seekers, not deporting them;
- Supporting families, not ripping children from their parents;
- Providing due process to the accused, not abducting them to foreign prisons without a trial;
- Respecting and celebrating the economic contributions and diversity that immigrants provide our nation, not demonizing and debasing them.

Reaching deep into our shared religious and American values, we therefore demand that:

- Mass deportation of immigrants end;
- Immigrants seeking asylum or facing deportation receive their due process rights including a fair hearing in court;
- Government officials stop using rhetoric that demonizes immigrants;
- Local police not collaborate or cooperate with ICE;

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[5] *The Texas Tribune and Pro Publica*, “Trump administration knew most Venezuelans deported from Texas to a Salvadoran prison had no U.S. convictions”. May 30, 2025.

[6] Zaitz, Steven. “Northport family facing deportation gets good news.” *TBR News Media*, April 11, 2025.

- Congress enact, at long last, much-needed reforms to our broken immigration laws and system.

In the end, our faith and the better angels of our national character compel us to support U.S immigration policies based on compassion and the common good, not cruelty and political expediency.

These values were epitomized by Episcopal Bishop Mariann Budde in her January 20th Inauguration Day sermon calling our government leaders to “show mercy” toward immigrants who "pick our crops" and "work the night shift in hospitals":

> "*They may not be citizens or have the proper documentation, but the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals…. They pay taxes and are good neighbors. They are faithful members of our churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples*.”

Pope Francis called America’s mass deportation of immigrants “a disgrace.” [7]

We agree.

It is our time to speak and to act on their behalf.

Respectfully,

Rt. Rev. Lawrence C. Provenzano, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Long Island	Rev. Paul T. Egensteiner, Bishop, Metropolitan New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	The Rev Dr. Katrina D. Foster, Bishop-elect, Metropolitan New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Brooklyn
Rev. Kate Jones Calone, Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Long Island	Richard Lawton Hanse, Long Island East District Superintendent, New York Annual Conference,	Sr. Tesa Fitzgerald, CSJ, President, Sisters of St. Joseph, Brentwood

[7] Russell Contreras. “Pope Francis congratulates Trump but calls mass deportation plan a ‘disgrace’. *Axios*, January 21, 2025. For statements by other faith leaders condemning mass deportations and the separation of immigrant families, see: https://sojo.net/about-us/news/national-faith-leaders-support-sanctuary-movement-work-trump-administration-seeks

	The United Methodist Church	
Sr. Peggy McVetty, OP, Prioress, Sisters of St. Dominic, Amityville	Rev. Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches	Sr. Elizabeth Hill, CSJ, President Emerita, St. Joseph's University
Rashida Tyler, Deputy Director, New York State Council of Churches	Dr. Janice Moore, Board Chair, Long Island Council of Churches and Pastor, Malverne Presbyterian Church	Rev. Canon Marie Tatro, Canon for Community Justice, Episcopal Diocese of Long Island
Rabbi Suzy Moskowitz, Temple Beth Torah, Melville	Rev. Jean Dougherty, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Smithtown	Rev. Larry Duncklee, Pastor, St. John the Evangelist RC Church, Riverhead
Rev. Robert Smith, Pastor, St. Hugh of Lincoln RC Church, Huntington Station	Rabbi Jodie Siff, The Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore, Manhasset	Rabbi Lee Freidlander, The Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore, Manhasset
Cantor Eric Shulmiller, The Reconstructionist Synagogue of the North Shore, Manhasset	Rabbi Ari Naveh, Bend the Arc - A Jewish Partnership for Justice	Sr. Janet Kinney, CSJ, Director, Long Island Immigration Clinic, Brentwood
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Mary Rothwell Davis, Esq. Vice-Chancellor for Immigration & Refugees Episcopal Diocese of New York	Rabbi Lina Zerbarini, Kehillath Shalom Synagogue, Cold Spring Harbor	Msgr. John Cervini, Pastor Emeritus, RC Mission Parish of El Cercado, Dominican Republic and Pastor Emeritus, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal RC Church, Wyandanch

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Rev. Ron Garner, Pastor, Orient Congregational Church, Board Member, Rural and Migrant Ministry	Joseph Dragone, St. Anthony of Padua RC Church, East Northport	Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair, The AMOS Steering Committee, Long Island Jobs with Justice
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