

INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

Two Years Too Long: Amidst the ongoing injustice of Title 42, we must restore asylum!

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(Photo at right: Disciples of Christ youth groups in Texas who held an Asylum Vigil)



Background

On Monday, March 21, “Los Revolucionarios,” a group of asylum-seekers based in Nogales, Sonora, MX, held protests against Title 42 at the border wall in the spirit of the Via Crucis/Stations of the Cross ([watch the recording here!](#))

As the Administration continues now to consider an end to Title 42, we urge faith communities across the country to host solidarity actions from now until the policy is ended and asylum is restored! Actions can take a variety of forms, such as a prayer vigil, a protest outside the offices of members of Congress, a creative banner drop, and more! The vigils will provide a public faith witness and grow awareness about the urgent need to restore asylum.

The call to end Title 42 is not new, nor is it unique to immigrant advocacy groups. There is a [growing call](#) from Members of Congress, Senate leadership, and public health professionals for the Biden administration to end Title 42. For additional information on Title 42, see these [talking points](#) from the Welcome With Dignity campaign and [check out the last section of this toolkit](#).

Together, we seek to:

- **Demand an immediate end of inhumane border practices** and the trauma they inflict upon immigrants. [Contact](#) your representatives and urge them to support the following actions:
 - ◆ End Title 42 and Migrant Protection Protocols (or ‘Remain in Mexico’)
 - ◆ Restore and improve pathways to protection, including humanitarian processing of asylum seekers and unaccompanied children.
 - ◆ Return asylum seekers who have been unjustly deported.
 - ◆ Strengthen support for humanitarian NGOs who are welcoming asylum seekers.

- **Mobilize vigils and other actions** at your local congressperson’s office, places of worship, or other public spaces in solidarity with the [Welcome With Dignity](#) campaign, asylum seekers, and border groups across the country. Mobilize your own action by signing up [here](#), or find an event near you [here](#).

- **Prepare faith and local communities** to support and welcome asylum seekers. People of faith and conscience can build awareness, work and pray for justice, and take action in solidarity with people seeking [asylum](#). [See additional resources and actions to support asylum seekers below!](#)

Tips for Hosting a Vigil & Sample Event Program

Below is an example of how a vigil might be ordered, but feel free to use your creativity as you create this event! Consider the resources that exist within your community or core planning group (such as an exceptional church choir or cantor, local poet, sign-language translator, artist, etc.) and use them in your vigil.

Additionally, keep in mind that actions do not need to be large to be effective – even 5-10 people can be enough! Border partners also encourage participants to **wear red** during events to symbolize the suffering of asylum seekers and to recall the power of our hearts in unity.

Preparations Before the Vigil

Before the event, print out multiple words of “Welcome” from various languages. For inspiration, see resources like [this](#). Try to print out as many “words of welcome” as you may have people, so that each participant can be handed one as they enter.

If you are gathering virtually, you may consider drawing a door on your screen or making a slide to screen share of a door from a google search of a site such as [here](#). For virtual use, you may also invite persons as they gather to think of a word of welcome in another language, and perhaps use a tool like a “[jamboard](#)” to invite persons to “place” their multilingual words of welcome on a note to add to your screen during the vigil’s “ritual” section below.

If you are holding an event in person, identify a door (if you are holding the vigil in your home or church). If outside, consider using a used door frame which you might have at your site for imagery during your vigil. As participants gather, distribute the words of welcome to them (with tape on the back of each word). Participants will be asked during the vigil to affix the words to the door. Also, print out (2 sided, with flip on short side) and be prepared to distribute “[Faith Asylum Take Action Cards](#)” at the close of the vigil.

Remember to encourage participants to wear red at your event, to demonstrate visible solidarity with migrants at the border who will be doing so to honor suffering migrants.

Welcoming Remarks

Invite a faith leader to share a few words about the focus and purpose of your vigil, addressing questions such as: Why now? What’s the concern? Who’s affected? How can this vigil convince others to support humane asylum processing? Below is a sample opening message:

Each Abrahamic faith tradition uplifts gratitude for the recognized abundance made possible through the blessing and gifts of the One called Allah, God, or Yahweh, and each faith calls believers to share bounty generously and practice justice with all who are in need.

Muslim believers are called to develop more generous love through the practice of fasting, and to remember that “Allah does not love the arrogant...who are miserly and bid others to be miserly and conceal the bounty which Allah has bestowed on them” (Quran 4:36). Jewish tradition retells the harvest story of the book of Ruth to emphasize God’s call to “leave the gleanings for the poor and the stranger” as instructed in Leviticus 23:33. Christians remember the gift of the Holy Spirit sent by God to strengthen love and give witness to unity and acceptance possible in God’s community where there is “neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, nor...male and female.” (Galatians 3:28) .

Therefore, we gather today around this doorway, aware of the values of many faiths to strengthen our capacity to honor the dignity in each person. We gather to grow our confidence in the abundance of blessings from our Creator. As we come together, deepen our resolve to urge for just policies that welcome individuals and families seeking asylum, humanely protect unaccompanied children, and call for an end to the Title 42 order, expedited removal, and each policy which continues and threatens to further traumatize those desperately seeking safety and fresh hope.

Opening Prayer

Ask a faith leader or a lay leader to open with a prayer. Here are a few samples:

Jewish Prayer

Dear Source of Life, Accompanier of the migrant, you have placed within us a wandering spirit and the desire to seek out goodness. Guide us on our journeys so that we encounter what is safe, kind, and welcoming. Allow the gifts we bring with us to be received and illuminate our humanity so that everyone we encounter can glimpse that we too, are created in the Image of the Sacred Sojourner.

Dear Listener to the oppressed, raise the cry of the detained so what has been hidden becomes revealed. May Your movement be felt in the midst of detention. Break the shackles of the inhumanity present in our immigration system. Deliver those who are detained to a safe destination.

Dear Rooted One, Foundation of the citizen, you have provided us with shelter under the canopy of wholeness. Remind us of our responsibility to all who wander, all who journey, because we too once were travelers migrating from place to place. Direct us to our hearts that love the migrant, because we too know the heart of the migrant. Urge us towards justice that embraces rather than separates, supports rather than divides.

Dear Source of Unity, together may we enrich one another's lives, benefiting from all that we have to offer and all that we learn together. Let us be made strong as we challenge an unjust system and let us be made whole. Protect us on our wanderings and bless us in our dwellings, may we know the sacred in each step towards our destination and peace in the spaces we call home. Rabbi Joshua Lesser, Congregation Bet Haverim

Christian Prayer

God of all nations, cultures, and peoples, we pray for all of our siblings who are forced to flee their homes and make a difficult journey in search of safety. Help us see you in the face of each stranger and to hear your voice in the cry of every child. They ask only for the chance to live free from fear, free from violence, and free from the poverty that robs their souls.

God of abundant welcome, open the doors of our hearts and our homes. Give us the grace to welcome these newcomers as we would welcome you. We pray that we may be a nation of compassion and may our borders be places of encounter with you, the living God. May all those arriving in this land find welcome, protection, opportunity, and the invitation to join their gifts with ours.

We pray this, in the name of the One who loves us all unconditionally and who calls us to love others in the same way.

Muslim Prayer

As Muslims, we remember Allah's love for migrants, and the call for us to "do good unto [our] parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor from among your own people, and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer..." (An-Nissa 4:36).

We must do so, for the Qur'an also reminds us that "when my servant cries out to me, then I am near to him. I answer the call of every caller when they call unto me, so that they will respond to my call and believe in me. So that they will find guidance."

Music

A singer, choir, or instrumentalist can perform; a few singers can lead participants in a song; or you may wish to play or sing a “welcome themed” songs like these from YouTube:

- [“Room at the Table for Everyone”](#) by Carrie Newcomer
- Hymn: [“Let Us Build a House”](#)
- [Chardi Kala](#) by Sonny Singh
- [“Crowded Table”](#) by the Highwomen

Litany or Additional Prayers

Here is a sample litany focused on ending Title 42:

Leader 1: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge that asylum law and policies be restored! Let us stand on the side of offering hospitality. Let us stand on the side of welcome!

Since March 2020—despite widespread outcries from faith, immigrant, healthcare, and human rights leaders—the order called “Title 42” has led to mass expulsions of more than 1.6 million migrants who’d fled violence and trauma in their homelands to seek hope and new life.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to urge an end to Title 42!

Leader 2: Under two administrations now, Title 42 has resulted in perilous tent cities of refugees at our southern border, and has blocked opportunities for families and adults from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Russian, Somalia, Venezuela, and Yemen to legally seek their right of asylum.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to restore asylum now!

Leader 3: A foundation of our faith is to welcome those who seek safe refuge and sanctuary.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today that will welcome asylum seekers with dignity!

Leader 4: Pushed towards desperation and denied opportunities to seek protection together, many migrant families have felt compelled to make the unbearably painful decision to separate; resulting in fractured families, and children crossing the border unaccompanied.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to halt all practices that deny humanity, separate families, and turn our backs on families and individuals fleeing persecution and seeking safety.

Leader 5: Affecting Black migrants egregiously, returns of more than 20,000 Haitian children and adults on over 200 deportation flights since February, 2021 have placed them in extreme danger amid political instability.

All: We raise our voices and prayers for justice today to end Title 42 and family separation, and instead welcome the vulnerable with dignity and commit in faith to restore asylum now!

Speaker

A local community member can share a personal story of how the broken immigration system has impacted them, their neighbors, or others in the community. You can also read stories and quotes, such as these written by migrants who have suffered and been expelled under Title 42:

- Story of “Claudia,” through Witness at the Border, “[Walk for the Children](#),” 4/21/2021
- Story of Tani in LA Times, [Title- 42 Policy Fuels Kidnappings of Migrant Families at Border & Extortion of US Relatives](#)
- Story of Muhamed in The Intercept, [New Report Documents Nearly 500 Cases of Violence Against Asylum Seekers Expelled by Biden](#)
- Story of “Justine” in [The Invisible Wall: Title 42 and Its Impact On Haitian Migrants](#), p. 42
- Find all above story excerpts compiled [here](#)

More than one story can be integrated throughout the program as well.

Communication Resources to Promote Your Vigil

Social Media

In promoting your event, you can use and share these [graphics](#) that feature quotes from faith leaders and impacted individuals.

Sample Media Advisory

Use the template below, updating the highlighted portions, to promote your event:

For Immediate Release: **DATE**

Media Contact: **NAME, PHONE, EMAIL**

Vigil to Restore Asylum & End Title 42 and MPP

*With Title 42 expulsions at the U.S. southern border continuing, and migrant referrals to MPP increasing, people of faith and immigration advocates will hold vigil at **[LOCATION]***

LOCATION: People of faith and immigration advocates will hold a vigil to demand an end to the policy of Title 42 that has been used to illegally block and expel over 1.6 million people seeking protection at the U.S. southern border, and instead restore asylum.

This vigil will be held at [LOCATION] to end the ongoing misuse of Title 42 during the Trump administration and now the Biden administration. Speakers will call for an end to the discriminatory and unjust treatment of asylum seekers under Title 42, which disproportionately harms Haitian and other Black migrants, and call for the Biden administration to welcome all people with dignity.

This vigil is hosted in solidarity with advocates in Washington DC and grassroots border groups mobilizing over recent weeks in Nogales and Tijuana, Mexico, to call for an end to Title 42, as well as the so-called “Migration Protection Protocols” (also known as Remain in Mexico), in order to restore due process to those seeking asylum in accordance with U.S. and international laws.

WHAT: Vigil to Restore Asylum on the Second Anniversary of Title 42

WHERE & WHEN: March/April ____, 2022

- Time
- Location

SPEAKERS: [Insert Here]

COSPONSORS: [Insert Here]

Additional Actions & Resources

Advocate for Asylum Seekers

- [Email and/or call your representatives](#) and urge them to halt inhumane expulsions and anti-asylum policies at the border.
- [Email your representatives](#) and urge them to protect Black immigrants and asylum seekers from deportation and family separation.
- [Sign the pledge](#) to #WelcomeWithDignity.
- Encourage children in your family, congregation, and community to share their support for welcoming and protecting asylum seekers with these family-friendly resources:
 - [Care Bear Prayers to Elected Officials](#). Send letters to your elected officials letting them know that you care about and are praying for migrant children.
 - Use these [teddy bear images](#) during a virtual or in-person vigil or on social media to advocate for migrant children.

Learn More

- Learn more about Title 42's impacts through this [factsheet](#).

- Learn how Title 42 impacts Haitian migrants [here](#).

Additional Background on Title 42 from [Welcome with Dignity](#)

- **Title 42** is an obscure provision of public health law that the Trump administration weaponized during the COVID-19 pandemic to deny families, children, and adults arriving at the southern border their right to seek asylum in the United States.
- **Title 42 is illegal.** The Title 42 policy deprives asylum seekers of their legal right to pursue protection, allowing border officials to rapidly expel them to Mexico or to their home countries with no process whatsoever.
 - The policy [violates the right](#) of people fleeing persecution not to be returned to danger, which is enshrined in the United States' laws and international treaty obligations.
- **Title 42 does not protect public health.** The CDC order authorizing the expulsions was issued over [objections](#) by senior CDC medical [experts](#) that it lacked a public health justification. The Biden administration has continued the abuse of Title 42 over the objections of [more than 100 members of Congress](#), [public health experts](#), and [top advisors](#) from the administration.
 - Practitioners have found Title 42 to [exacerbate](#) the spread of COVID-19 and other public health challenges.
- **Title 42 fuels violence and chaos at the southern border.** Since President Biden took office, there have been [reports of violent attacks](#)—including rape, kidnapping, and assault—against people blocked from requesting asylum protection at the U.S.-Mexico border and/or expelled to Mexico under Title 42, as tracked by Human Rights First.
- **Title 42 causes family separation** by forcing parents to make the impossible decision to keep their children safe by sending them across the border alone, or risk their children's lives to stay together in dangerous conditions in Mexico.
- **Title 42 has had a disparate impact on Black migrants seeking safety.** Under the Biden administration, Title 42 has been used to expel Black refugees back to the countries they fled and to dangerous regions in Mexico without access to U.S. asylum.
 - Despite national outcry following brutality against Haitian families in Del Rio, the administration's cruelty towards Haitian people seeking asylum has escalated. In less than a year, the administration has sent 178+ removal flights to Haiti.

Solutions

- [The Biden administration must restart](#) asylum, including at ports of entry and along the border.
- The United States has the ability to protect public health and safeguard the lives of children, families, and adults seeking asylum and other humanitarian protections - just like we have for non-asylum seekers during the pandemic.
 - Ports of entry have been open to shoppers, tourists, and other travelers since [November](#), but asylum seekers, even those with proof of vaccination, continue to be [blocked and expelled](#).

- Epidemiologists and public health experts have [repeatedly called on the Biden administration to revoke the Title 42 order](#), stating that we can both protect public health and the lives of people seeking refuge by using the kinds of public health measures we all now use.
 - Instead of blocking people seeking humanitarian protection, the U.S. government should employ measures recommended by [public health experts](#) and [UNHCR](#) – such as distancing and masks, health screenings, testing, and use of non-congregate settings – to [quickly](#) process and parole asylum seekers, pending immigration court proceedings.
- View more policy solutions [here](#).