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## **Principles for Comprehensive Immigration Reform In the United States**

Undocumented immigrants pay taxes, and contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of their communities in countless ways. A legalization program would recognize the equity undocumented people have built through their participation in U.S. society and acknowledge the inherent injustice of the secrecy, vulnerability, and exploitation imposed on undocumented women, men and children.

- AFSC Board of Directors, June 23, 2001 -

The work of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in immigrant communities is based on our belief in the worth and inherent dignity of every person. As an expression of this commitment, we have consistently expressed support for undocumented immigrants. AFSC has repeatedly called on the U.S. government to grant permanent residency to all undocumented men, women and children. We thus believe that actions leading to comprehensive immigration reform should reflect the following components:

1. Respect for the civil rights and all human rights of immigrants;
2. Inclusive and coordinated measures that support immigration status adjustment for undocumented workers;
3. Support for the distinctly important and valuable role of family ties by supporting the reunification of immigrant families;
4. Humane policies that protect workers and their labor and employment rights;
5. Measures that reduce backlogs that delay the ability of immigrants to become U.S. permanent residents and full participants in the life of the nation and of their communities;
6. The removal of quotas and other barriers that impede or prolong the process for the adjustment of immigration status;
7. Guarantees that no federal programs, means-tested or otherwise, will be permitted to single out immigrants for exclusion;
8. Demilitarization of the U.S.-México border and respect and protection of the region's quality of life.

### **Immigration Realities: An AFSC Perspective**

The growth of undocumented migration is a worldwide phenomenon. Although many people are propelled into migration for political and other reasons, labor migration clearly accounts for the greatest part of the migrant stream. In this sense, the growth of a transnational labor force is a structural feature of increasing global economic integration. U.S. policies that are intended to deter undocumented migration have failed entirely to achieve this objective, while increasing the violation of human rights, as well as aggravating anti-immigrant prejudice and hate violence.

In addition, punitive measures such as increased surveillance and patrols at the border, raids on homes and workplaces, and detaining and deporting undocumented people do not address the underlying reasons that people migrate. Those measures create fear and polarization during a time when we should be creating hope and peace in our communities.

One stark indication of this failure is that hundreds of migrants die each year trying to cross the Mexican-U.S. border in increasingly dangerous circumstances. U.S. communities that lie along the border with Mexico live a reality that is essentially different from the rest of the country. U.S. immigration policy has transformed the region into a militarized zone where the U.S. Constitution and international law are applied only selectively. Efforts to secure the southern border have had dire human consequences, from the ever-increasing tally of migrant deaths to the systemic violation of the civil and human rights of border crossers and border communities.

Because border enforcement is a reality that these communities will continue to face, it is essential that any debate that focuses on increasing the security of the U.S.-Mexico border be based on a strong commitment to accountability and human rights, including civil rights. It is essential that the perspectives of those who live in border communities be included in such a debate.

AFSC calls upon the U.S. Congress to consider that its policies, laws, and regulations on immigration will affect the rest of the world negatively or positively, especially our neighbors to the South. Remittances from migrant workers in the United States and other rich countries contribute more to the economies of their countries of origin than all forms of development assistance, by approximately 50 percent yearly. For many of the world's poor, economic integration through remittances is the only form of economic globalization with a positive impact on their living standards. Sooner or later, comprehensive immigration reform will need to be carried out not just unilaterally, but multilaterally, in concert with the needs and interests of other countries that send migrants or refugees to the United States and whose cultures, peoples, and economic prospects are thereby bound up with the citizens and residents of this country.