

Interfaith Statement on Deplorable Treatment of Migrant Families

[June 16, 2018/Atlanta, GA] The interfaith community in Atlanta (FAMA, ICI and Neshama) expresses our strong opposition to the recently expanded “zero-tolerance” policy that includes separating children from their migrant parents when they cross the border. This policy undermines the values of our nation and jeopardizes the safety and well-being of thousands of people.

As a compassionate nation, we must understand the plight of being an immigrant fleeing violence and oppression. The United States is a nation of immigrants; how we treat the stranger reflects our moral values and highest ideals.

We call on Attorney General Sessions, Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen and others who are empowered to keep our country safe, to embrace the ethic of the Golden Rule (one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself) that is deeply rooted in our country’s civic and religious values. As often repeated in sacred scripture, “Love Your Neighbor As Yourself”, is a demand that we concern ourselves with the well-being of others without the expectation of anything in return. We ask you, as leaders and as people of faith, to live up to this sacred obligation.

Separating families is a cruel punishment for children and families simply seeking a better life. In addition, this policy adds to the significant backlog in federal courts and places thousands more immigrants in detention facilities and shelters. Children’s lives are endangered by warehousing them in unhealthy, inadequate and unsupervised environments that are not open to scrutiny by even our elected officials.

Our nation’s law has given you the discretion to ensure that young children are not separated from their parents and exposed to irreparable harm and trauma. Families are the foundational element of our society and they must be able to stay together.

Our faiths demand that we take care of the stranger in our midst. Our scriptures demand that we empathize with their plight (Exodus 22:21, “as you were strangers”) and keep in mind the many struggles faced by immigrants today. Our faiths compel our commitment to an immigration system in this country that is compassionate and just. We urge you to immediately rescind the “zero tolerance” policy and uphold the values on which our nation was built.

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