

[Opinion](#)



Immigrant families are released from detention July 27 at a bus depot in McAllen, Texas. (CNS/Reuters/Loren Elliott)



by Tony Magliano

[View Author Profile](#)

tmag@zoominternet.net

[Join the Conversation](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

August 29, 2018

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

In the last judgment scene of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus sends a severe warning that hell awaits those who ignore meeting the essential human needs of the poor and vulnerable — and thus likewise, ignore him ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)).

And in reference to those who display a lack of hospitality toward migrants and refugees, Jesus warns, "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me." Now, just imagine the indignation expressed in his words if they had been, "I was a stranger, and not only did you not welcome me, you took my child from me!"

The Trump administration's inhumane and unchristian immigration policy of "zero-tolerance" — stepped-up apprehension and detention of migrants/refugees often fleeing armed conflict and drug gang violence, [mass assembly-line criminal court trials](#), jail sentences imposed, and deportation back to the violence refugees were fleeing — was started under President George W. Bush and continued under President Obama.

Joanna Williams, director of education and advocacy for the [Kino Border Initiative](#) told me the U.S. practice of criminally charging refugees for entry into the country is against international law as defined by the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) and its 1967 Protocol — of which the U.S. is a signatory. The convention states that refugees have "the right not to be punished for illegal entry into the territory of a contracting State [nation]," and that they have the right to work, education, public relief and assistance.

Advertisement

But the Trump administration's policy of systematically separating refugee families was a new and even lower attempt to fearfully deter fleeing families from entering the U.S.

Children as young as 18 months old have [reportedly been forcefully taken away](#) from their parents and placed in government-run facilities.

But a federal court ordered the Trump administration to end its policy of family separation and to reunite all children with their parents.

Advocacy Officer Esmeralda Lopez of the [U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](#) told me that 2,654 migrant children were separated from their parents in total, and according to a recent federal report, 565 children still remain separated from their parents.

And to make this sad unjust situation worse, the Trump administration appears to have no idea how to reunite the more than 400 parents it has already deported while their children are still in U.S.

Though the court order now bans family separation, it will not keep the Trump administration from continuing its heartless "zero-tolerance" policy toward suffering refugees. That will only come from massive political pressure from us.

Adding injury to insult, the Trump administration [cut \\$300 million in funding](#) to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, which provides emergency assistance and basic human services to Palestinian refugees.

But the U.S. is not the only economically developed nation to turn its back on most of the world's 25 million refugees, 40 million internally displaced people and 3 million asylum-seekers.

Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Macedonia, Austria and France (funded by the U.K.) have all recently [built barriers](#) to keep out refugees.

War, drug gangs, the flow of weapons, militarism, individual and corporate greed, poverty, lack of comprehensive immigration reform legislation, nationalism — as in "America first" — and a secularism that has little place for God are among the root-causes that are forcing our brothers and sisters to seek safer havens.

Let's us commit ourselves to up-rooting these poisonous weeds and sow seeds of true Christian welcome.

[Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings and can be reached at tmag@zoominternet.net.]