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Jesuit Network with migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean (RJM-LAC)

Latin America and the Caribbean: Migrants, an urgent call by God for justice and hospitality

In commemoration of International Migrants Day, the works of the Society of Jesus, members of Jesuit Network with migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean (RJM-LAC), issue a message of solidarity and hope to the [214 million migrant brothers and sisters in the world](#). Despite the valuable contributions migrants make to their new host societies and countries of origin, a significant number of them are forced to live in vulnerable circumstances, without international protection from human rights violations.

In recent decades migration flows have increased in number and complexity. For instance, the number of [migrants has increased from 150 to 214 million between 2002 and 2010](#); and today this phenomenon affects many groups of migrants, those displaced within their own countries or across international borders, due to sexual violence, political, economic or environmental instability.

Migrants are a sign of the times in which God calls us urgently to be hospitable, to welcome them as brothers and sisters, and to include them into our societies by guaranteeing the totality of their rights, without distinction on the basis of ethnicity, religious beliefs, cultural background, economic standing, or legal status.

It is an invitation to put into practice the words of St Paul in his letter to the Galatians (3.28) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

Or as proclaimed in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly, all human beings are "members of the human family", "born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

In Latin America and the Caribbean

Approximately 26 million Latin American and Caribbean women and men are living outside their countries of origin, principally in the US, Spain and within the subcontinent. The principle causes of emigration in the region include social inequity, inequality between countries, poverty, violence, natural disasters and the unbalanced development model, centred on the excessive extraction of natural resources.

Without doubt the adoption of solutions and responses to eradicate the above mentioned structural causes of emigration is and will continue to be one of the dominant themes in the region. Faced by this reality "[attending to the needs of migrants, including refugees, internally displaced, and trafficked people, continue to be an apostolic preference of the Society](#)" (General Congregation 35 of the Society of Jesus, Decree 3, no. 39).

In order to stimulate this apostolic preference, the Jesuit Network with migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean (RJM-LAC) forms part of the Global Ignation Advocacy Network. RJM-LAC seeks to accompany migrants, other displaced persons and refugees in an efficient, coordinated and integrated manner in a number of diverse areas of action: pastoral, education, social, legal, research and advocacy. This approach integrates the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Jesuit Migration

Service and other programmes of universities, parishes and colleges of the Society of Jesus regarding migration, displacement and asylum.

RJM-LAC believes that all persons have the right to live, work and realise their full human potential in their homes or places of habitual residence. However, when this is not possible, they have the right to seek better living conditions outside their homes or places of habitual residence, be that within their countries of origin or across international borders.

It is for this reason the network condemns all forms of human rights violations or discrimination against migrants, such as:

- the social stigmatization by the media and the criminalisation by states of irregular migration;
- the systematic denial by many states to grant international protection to asylum seekers and refugees, leaving them in extremely vulnerable situations;
- the application of restrictive migration policies, centring on detention, deportation and border control;
- the consequential strengthening of smuggling and trafficking networks many of which are integrally related to state corruption and impunity;
- the exploitation of migrants in the labour market; and
- the particular vulnerability of women and minors.

We oppose the unbalanced development model, promoted by multinational corporations, which prioritise the market over human development, free movement of persons and consequently the destruction of the environment and the extraction of natural resources, displacing entire populations.

RJM-LAC calls for:

- the universal ratification of the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
- the granting of effective international protection to asylum seekers and refugees;
- the implementation of comprehensive and inclusive migration policies which not only address labour migration, but also cultural, social, religious and political dimensions of people's lives;
- the protection of human rights, regardless of the migration status of the individual concerned, with particular attention to vulnerable sectors of the population such as women and minors; and
- a person-centred, sustainable development model.

Finally, the network urges Latin American and Caribbean states and populations to value the contribution of migrants to their societies and to struggle for a more just and hospitable region.

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