

## CATHOLIC LEADERS VOICE CONCERN OVER NEW ASYLUM RULES

November 25, 2019

WASHINGTON - On Monday, November 18, the Administration published two notices in the *Federal Register* to implement asylum cooperative agreements with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The rules would allow the U.S. government to send asylum seekers to the three Central American countries without the opportunity to access asylum in the United States, and require the respective Central American governments to adjudicate asylum claims and attempt to provide protection.

Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and Chairman of the Committee on Migration for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Sean Callahan, President and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), issued the following statement in response:

“Vulnerable individuals seeking protection and safety in the United States should be welcomed and given the chance to access the protection that our laws provide. If implemented, we fear that the asylum cooperation agreements would leave many helpless people, including families and children, unable to attain safety and freedom from violence and persecution. The governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras do not have the resources nor the capacity to safely accept, process, and integrate asylees. There are numerous concerns with the implementation of these agreements **which have also been voiced** . . . by the Catholic Church of Guatemala. Furthermore, these agreements do not address the root causes of forced migration and could further endanger the lives of people fleeing a region that continues to have some of the highest homicide rates in the world.

These rules, combined with the implementation of the Migration Protection Protocol and the continued hold of humanitarian and development assistance to Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, undermines U.S. moral leadership in protecting vulnerable populations and risks further destabilizing the region. To preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, we cannot turn our back on families and individuals in desperate need of help. In light of the Gospel, let us always remember we are invited to embrace the foreigner and to take care of this human person. Let us move ourselves from a culture of indifference to a Christian culture of solidarity. We can and must do more.”