

# No More Deaths • No Más Muertes

Fall/Winter 2019

Dear Friends of No More Deaths/ No Más Muertes,

The “wall” on the Organ Pipe National Monument Arizona border is being constructed as you read this letter. All efforts to stop it failed and sadly, visitors to this quintessential Sonoran Desert region will be confronted with the reality of an environmental and human catastrophe. For migrants, who already suffer many indignities on their journeys north, the wall now adds another dimension to their difficulties. For wildlife that lives on both sides of the border, the wall is an instrument of distress, blocking their natural pathways, and threatening the survival of endangered species.

When families are fleeing poverty, violence and severe weather events related to climate change in their home countries, as many Central Americans and others are, their right to migrate is a human right that we privileged people of the North must acknowledge and one that our government should protect. With the recent shift in our government’s policy that keeps asylum seekers in Mexico, we’re seeing an unprecedented number of families waiting on the Mexican side of the border in extremely difficult and dangerous situations.

The current estimate is that around 40,000 people are being asked to wait four to six weeks or more

before they can present their cases to a court. Because of this bottleneck, some are choosing to risk crossing the desert - a journey that has caused suffering and death for thousands.



*Border Wall by Bob Torrez ©*

Providing humanitarian aid to those in need on this journey has been our consistent response, even though the government is trying to criminalize that aid, most recently by prosecuting nine of our volunteers this past year, including Scott Warren’s felony trial in June. The Warren trial resulted in a hung jury. However, in a disappointing turn of events, the government has opted to retry the case beginning November 12. Warren’s charge of conspiracy was dropped but felony harboring charges, which could result in ten years of prison, were not. As of this writing, we can’t know the result of the retrial, but no matter the outcome, No

**You can make a tax-deductible donation online at [nomoredeaths.org](http://nomoredeaths.org) or by check.**

**Make checks payable to “UUCT/No More Deaths.” Mail them to PO Box 40782, Tucson, AZ 85717.**

**Please consider setting up a recurring donation, so that we can rely on your support.**

**No More Deaths gratefully accepts stocks, bonds, endowed gifts, and bequests. We also welcome your ideas for fundraising opportunities.**

**Please contact us at [fundraising@nomoredeaths.org](mailto:fundraising@nomoredeaths.org).**

More Deaths' work will continue. (To get updates on the trial, see [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org) or follow us on social media.)

In closing, we wish to acknowledge the work of all border justice groups, as well as individuals who share with us our mission of ending suffering and death in the U.S.-Mexico border region. It is you, our generous supporters and donors, who "grease the wheels" of our work with your ongoing contributions. We are so grateful to each and every one of you and ask for your continued generous support at this critical time. Please use the enclosed envelope to make a gift or give online at [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org).

Whatever your tradition at this time of the year, may the blessing of the season be yours.

In solidarity and with deep gratitude,  
The No More Deaths/ No Más Muertes community

## ***NMD Confronts Local Sheriff's Office About Discriminatory Search & Rescue Practices, Demands Change***

In response to the death of an undocumented teenage boy at the end of May when governmental agencies did not deploy a search and rescue operation when requested, a coalition of concerned community members called an emergency meeting. The No More Deaths Abuse Documentation and Search & Rescue teams met with Pima County, Arizona Sheriff Mark Napier, the Colibrí Center for Human Rights, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Community Law Enforcement Partnership Commission, and a member of the deceased's family. The goal of the meeting was to strongly urge the Pima County Sheriff's Department to deploy its resources in response to borderlands search and rescue emergencies in the future for all people without prejudice.

The death of this individual is tragic, and unfortunately not an anomaly. The No More Deaths Missing Migrant Crisis hotline received at least 857 calls about missing migrants from May through July of 2019, and Pima County's 911 dispatch line receives between 4-5 emergency calls from people crossing the border every day. Historically, Pima County has transferred all 911 calls from people crossing the border between ports of entry to the U.S. Border Patrol with no follow-up, documentation, or mobilization by Pima County's Search and Rescue team.

The Abuse Documentation Team's upcoming third installment in the report series *Disappeared: How U.S. Border Enforcement Agencies are Fueling a Missing Persons Crisis*, exposes systemic governmental non-response to reported borderlands emergencies. The report will include analysis of two years of over 456 case notes from the Missing Migrant Crisis Line and over 2,000 emergency 911 calls. In 60% of cases in which an emergency search was requested from Border

### **New Humanitarian Aid Office in Ajo, Arizona**



*Ajo Aid Office*

The office is open Thursdays from 4-6pm and on Saturdays from 10am-noon. For more information, to volunteer, or to make a donation, go to [ajosamaritans.com](http://ajosamaritans.com).

Patrol, there was no confirmed search.

In a follow-up meeting in August, the Pima County Sheriff's Department informed us that they had taken steps to improve their Search and Rescue protocols. The Department has committed to respond to search and rescue cases that are within their jurisdiction and when Border Patrol will not respond or the county deems the Border Patrol effort inadequate. The department also committed to documenting the outcomes of cases in their jurisdiction which 911 dispatchers transfer to Border Patrol. The Abuse Documentation Team will continue to work with Pima County government agencies to provide effective search and rescue services for all distressed people in the borderlands.

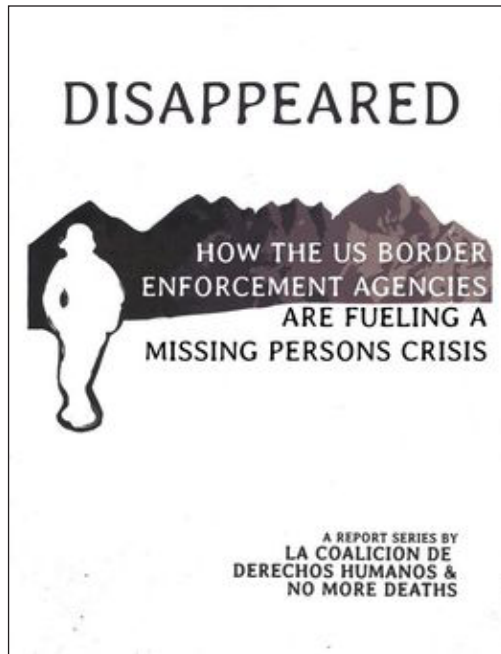
The next installment of the Disappeared report series detailing Border Patrol emergency non-response will be released in early 2020. You can read the first two reports in the series here: [www.thedisappearedreport.org](http://www.thedisappearedreport.org).

— Parker Deighan, No More Deaths Abuse Documentation Coordinator

## Communications from the Missing Migrant Crisis Hotline

Since January, No More Deaths' Missing Migrant Crisis hotline has logged 6,640 calls in their mission to help migrants lost, injured, and dying in the desert borderlands.

"When we established the hotline in 2017," an operator remembers, "there were very few of us.



Cover of the Disappeared Report

Often it's a mother calling, consumed with unimaginable pain and worry, searching for her son or daughter. Cases include detention searches and migrants missing in the desert of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and California."

If you Google "Searching for Someone Lost at the Border" or "Persona Desaparecida Arizona," No More Deaths' hotline comes up. When a call comes in, volunteers ask the caller's relationship to the missing person and where the individual crossed, urging callers to contact their home country consulate. When the person is detained, No More Deaths helps them navigate the detention system, explaining their rights while in detention and how to open a phone

account and commissary. For those seeking asylum, No More Deaths offers legal resources. If the person is not detained, the volunteer ascertains who had the last communication and when, where the person departed from, and any other source of information, such as someone who crossed with them or knew their route. The window for potential rescue is two to five days.

"Our response depends on time frame, whether the missing person has a phone, and their physical condition," a volunteer explains. "It's a tremendous emotional strain for the same few people on call, so it's healthy to build up the team. Soon, there will be eight trained operators. We've established protocols for interacting with Border Patrol. We are expanding our relationships with several consulates, the Colibri Center (who works with the Pima County Medical Examiner), the Tohono O'odham Nation, and allied search groups."

Many families don't want to talk directly with authorities who work within the system that has deliberately disappeared their loved one. Detention center employees don't always speak Spanish. Often relatives are put through to an answering machine. The ICE locator is the only public database for detainees, and it can be difficult to navigate or inaccurate because authorities enter the name wrong, and there can be long delays.

"We act as a humane cushion between the family



and authorities,” an operator observes. “We give emotional support during recoveries, disappearance, and death. We meet with the family, have dinner with them, light a candle for their loved one, offer what comfort we can.”

If families can help with a search, No More Deaths teammates take their lead from the family.

“We accompany them on searches, assist with logistics and navigating maps, and give moral support,” a volunteer says. “But we have to be clear about our capacity and not give false hope. We try to stay realistic.”

When medical examiners confirm the identity of remains, No More Deaths team members travel to be with the families, if in Arizona or Sonora, Mexico. Struck by the families’ strength and resilience, volunteers strive to uphold their stories, to prevent them from being defined only by a dot on a map, lost in the flood of statistics.

— Katherine Pew, No More Deaths volunteer



No More Deaths was founded in 2004 in Tucson, Arizona. Our mission is to end the death and suffering of migrants on the US–Mexico border by mobilizing people of conscience to uphold fundamental human rights. Our work includes providing aid in the desert, providing aid in Mexico, documenting and denouncing

## By the Numbers...

### During 2019, No More Deaths volunteers:

- Placed over 15,000 gallons of water on migrant trails in the southern Arizona borderlands;
- Provided humanitarian aid in five northern Mexico border towns - Nogales, Altar, Sasabe, Sonoyta, and Caborca;
- Managed 2,944 clients visits at our Keep Tucson Together legal aid clinic. The clinic is currently serving 1,273 active DACA clients and 1,100 naturalization clients;
- Operated the Property-Recovery Project, which saved 200 people’s personal effects from loss and destruction after they were arrested by Border Patrol (a 141% increase over last year);
- Distributed over 8,000 yard signs and 10,000 bumper stickers for our #HumanitarianAidIsNeveraCrime legal campaign across the country; and
- Provided legal, logistical and communications support for four federal trials this year of nine volunteers, due to unprecedented criminalization of our humanitarian aid work.

abuse, searching for the disappeared, helping get belongings back, running a biweekly legal clinic for undocumented community members, and alliances with border communities. We are a ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson. To contact us, call (520)333-5699 or visit our website at [nomoredeaths.org](http://nomoredeaths.org).

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS BY NO MORE DEATHS VOLUNTEERS