



No More Deaths • No Más Muertes

Humanitarian Aid Is Never A Crime

Dear Friends of No More Deaths/ No Más Muertes,

“Indifference to evil is more evil than evil itself.” – Cornel West

“The purpose of story,” said Jodi Picault in her book, Change of Heart, “is to be a crowbar that slides under your skin, and with luck, cracks your mind wide open.” If that is true, then may the stories in this newsletter be the “cracking” kind through which the light of truth illuminates our minds by sparking a fire that transforms inertia into action.



Resist the Wall: Strengthen the Spirit event at the border wall in Arizona, Sept. 2020

The suffering we see in the borderlands has been intensified by the illegal construction of the border wall. Both people and wildlife are deeply harmed, increasing death and suffering on all levels. The land, water and sacred places of native peoples is desecrated as huge machines run roughshod over pristine desert, constructing an instrument of torture whose purported purpose is to “keep us safe and secure” while people seeking a better life suffer and die as a result.

That the wall is a symbol of safety and security is a lie. It is an evil that we cannot be silent about. The waste of our tax dollars, so needed elsewhere,

is a moral affliction spawned out of a mindset of ignorance, fear and hatred. When our own government is the perpetrator of a narrative that spews that fear and hatred, we cannot be silent.

The remains of 181 human beings have been recovered in the Arizona desert so far this year. No matter the election results (as of this writing, the results are unclear), lives will continue to be lost in the borderlands unless we have major immigration policy reform in this country.

You can make a tax-deductible donation online at 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.

The decades-long border policy of “prevention through deterrence” must stop if the deaths of migrants are to cease. Border walls, like all border enforcement and militarization, lead to suffering, death, and disappearance.

In September, People Helping People (PHP), a community activist group from Arivaca, Arizona, twelve miles from the border, organized a week-long prayer vigil: RESIST THE WALL, STRENGTHEN THE SPIRIT, RESIST BORDER VIOLENCE THROUGH INTERFAITH ACTION. Numerous faith traditions and humanitarian and border justice groups participated. In solidarity with the native peoples holding ceremonies and protests at Quitobaquito Springs on Organ Pipe National Monument further west, and where wall construction threatens to destroy that ancient site, groups gathered and created a sacred space two hundred yards from the wall near Ambos Sasabe, Arizona/Sonora. They held prayer vigils while noisy Fisher Sand and Gravel Company trucks hauled concrete, water and thirty foot bollards past them. No one witnessing this assault on sacred lands believed they were going to physically stop it that day or week. However, the power of presence and witnessing is a spiritual action and, we hope some day, the “cracking” spirit of love, justice and peace will shine through the “walls” of ignorance, fear and hatred.

That’s the vision we hold and it continues to drive our humanitarian aid work. Thank you for partnering with us and for your continued compassion and generosity.

We’re grateful to all of you for your continued support of our work. Please use the enclosed envelope to make a generous year-end gift, if you’re able, or give online at www.nomoredeaths.org.

Whatever your traditions at this time of year, may the peace of the season be yours.

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

*#SaveAsylum coalition, September 21st
action in Nogales
Photo by Kino Border Initiative*

Hope fades along the border for thousands

As thousands of migrants wait along the border in Mexico, indefinitely delayed on their long, dangerous journey to the United States due to the cruel policies of the Trump administration, hope is starting to fade for many. Since January 2019, when the “Remain in Mexico” program was initiated, more than 60,000 refugees have been sent back across the border to dangerous towns and cities to await their asylum hearings, which were scheduled months, or even years, in the future. Few thought the situation could get worse. But then it did.

With the arrival of COVID-19 into the United States in February 2020, the Trump administration quickly used this as a pretense to indefinitely postpone or cancel all asylum hearings for those waiting in Mexico. 60,000 people were now put in a nightmare limbo with no good options. Then, a few weeks later, on March 20, the administration again used COVID-19 as a cover to further enforce additional anti-immigrant policies, by implementing “emergency measures” that now deny almost all migrants the ability to even ask for asylum. Anyone stopped at the border, or while migrating through the borderlands, is quickly returned to Mexico, usually within two hours of being detained. **There currently is no opportunity to declare asylum at the border and migrants have nowhere to go.**

In addition, the Trump administration is now trying to permanently end asylum pathways into this country for those entering along the southern border. In June, they proposed new rules that would make claiming asylum more difficult. The proposed rules would create procedural



obstacles, high burdens of proof, and narrow grounds to claim asylum. In effect, most asylum seekers would never meet these impossible standards and be denied due process to be heard before an immigration judge, effectively ending the asylum process in this country.

To protest this unprecedented assault against the right to claim asylum by this administration, the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) started the SAVE ASYLUM project. As of September, only one percent, or about 525 migrants, were granted asylum or another form of protection in 2020, out of the tens of thousands who applied. All others were deported or their cases terminated. This has led to confusion and despair among many waiting at the border.

"The sense of desperation is really powerful, and the precariousness that people have to live in is unsustainable," states Sara Ritchie, Kino's communications director.

KBI, an allied organization of No More Deaths/ No Más Muertes, runs the "Comedor", which has provided food, humanitarian aid and shelter to migrants since 2006 in Nogales, Sonora. As a partner organization, No More Deaths currently provides funds to KBI to subsidize the costs of medical care and transportation for migrants. In addition, No More Deaths provides a check-cashing/ debit card service for those recently released from ICE detention (see "By the Numbers" in this newsletter).

No More Deaths is a supporting organization of the SAVE ASYLUM campaign. To get involved in this campaign, go to www.saveasylum.org.

Military-style Raids on No More Deaths' Humanitarian Aid Station

Byrd Camp, a remote humanitarian aid station operated by No More Deaths/ No Más Muertes, has been raided twice

this year by Border Patrol, **once on July 31st, and again on October 5th. The raids, which both occurred at nightfall or shortly after, involved a BearCat tank, dozens of trucks and ATVs, and a helicopter circling above. They also included agents from BORTAC, a quasi-military branch of Border Patrol that has been deployed to war zones.** Agents stormed the camp with night vision goggles and assault rifles.

Volunteers on site were detained and had their cell phones and cameras taken, denying witness to the violence. However, they could hear radio chatter and see lights from flashlights chasing people around the property. A helicopter

spotlighted different areas, hovering low and kicking up dust and debris, making it even more impossible to see in the darkness.

Border Patrol and BORTAC agents chased and terrorized those who were receiving care, a practice referred to as chase and scatter, meant to frighten and disorient people.



Damage to aid station after July 31st Border Patrol raid

Agents then proceeded to smash windows, break doors, and destroy essential camp infrastructure and supplies. Both raids occurred after extended periods of heavy surveillance, creating an antagonistic and distressing environment for those receiving care.

Yanely Rivas, No More Deaths volunteer coordinator, who was present for the first raid, reflected that the violence witnessed during both raids is actually quite routine in the borderlands:

"Since 2004, Byrd Camp has been a location where people crossing through the harsh Sonoran Desert can find food, water, medical care, and respite. Byrd Camp has always operated openly and transparently and offered

humanitarian aid according to the International Red Cross Code of Conduct.

Border Patrol's continual surveillance and harassment of Byrd Camp deters migrants from accessing essential care. The targeting, interference and criminalization of humanitarian aid furthers the agency's deadly policies. Border Patrol detains people in unsafe and deadly facilities where medical neglect is rampant and human rights abuses are well documented."

At the time of writing, no criminal charges have been filed against volunteers. No More Deaths affirms the right of all people, regardless of nationality, to give and receive humanitarian aid. Our volunteers are trained to respect autonomy when providing care as is standard practice in the medical field and only call 911 and Border Patrol with patient consent. We will continue to be a presence in the desert as long as Border Patrol policies create a crisis of death and disappearance.

To learn more about Border Patrol's deadly enforcement practices and interference with humanitarian aid, see our abuse documentation reports at thedisappearedreport.org.



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....

Over the past year, No More Deaths volunteers and staff:

- Placed over 15,000 gallons of water on migrant trails in the southern Arizona borderlands. In addition, 2,100 cans of beans and countless trail snacks, socks, and blankets have been placed along migrant trails (Note: COVID-19 protocols have reduced our water drops since March);
- Bonded out 48 clients from ICE immigration jails (or on humanitarian parole) through our Emergency COVID-19 Bond Fund, since March;
- Assisted over 200 clients to become U.S. citizens (since 2015, No More Deaths' legal clinic has assisted 1,500 individuals in becoming citizens);
- Helped over 250 people apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status;
- Helped 529 people recover \$185,839 from their jail accounts after being deported to Mexico with uncashable checks/ debit cards;
- Staffed the Property Recovery Project, which helped 94 migrants recover their personal effects after they were arrested by Customs and Border Protection;
- Provided funds for 89 migrants to purchase bus tickets to return home or to travel to Ciudad Juarez or Tijuana to wait for their asylum hearing; and provided funds to assist 18 migrants to receive medical care and medications (April - August 2020 data); and
- Processed calls and conducted searches documenting 136 migrants who passed away or disappeared, through our 24-hour Missing Migrant Hotline and the work of our Search & Rescue team (January-October 2020).

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.