

# JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE



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## Failing the Moral Test as a Nation

Matthew 25: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

by Fred Kammer, SJ, JD

The Trump Administration's capitulation to a Turkish invasion of Kurdish regions of Syria has begun to displace thousands of Kurdish civilians fleeing war's destruction and death. They join more than 70 million refugees and internally displaced people fleeing for their lives worldwide. [1]



### New report!

[Rich School, Poor School: Education \[In\]Equity in Louisiana](#)

#### JSRI Future Activities.

**October 25-26**

The JSRI Advisory Board will meet in New Orleans at the Holy Name of Jesus Parish Center.

#### JSRI Recent Activities

**August 30**

On a conference call with JSRI Action Alert subscribers, Dr. Sue Weishar interviewed Ms. Mary Townsend, Executive Director of El Pueblo Legal Services, a Biloxi non-profit, about the impact of the August 7 ICE raids on central Mississippi families and communities.

**October 2**

Over sixty freshmen honors students and their mentors participated in an Ignatian Teach-In on Mass Incarceration co-led by Dr. Weishar in the Audubon Room.

**October 2 and 16**

Dr. Dennis Kalob facilitated planning meetings at Loyola for the commemoration in November of the 30th anniversary of the assassination of six Jesuit priests and two of their companions in El Salvador.

**October 7**

Dr. Kalob gave a guest lecture in Dr. Al Alcazar's Multicultural Education course at Loyola. The talk was about what it means to be a white ally to people of color and others.

**October 8**

Dr. Kalob attended the Faith-Labor Alliance Breakfast.

**October 8-9**

Fr. Kammer gave six presentations on JSRI Houston social analysis report to students at Strake Jesuits College Prep in Houston.

**October 10**

JSRI released [Rich School, Poor School: Education \[In\]Equity in Louisiana](#), authored by Dr. Nik Mitchell with the assistance of Research Assistant Millicent Eib.

**October 16**

Fr. Kammer presented reflections on social research to Jesuit university centers meeting in Portland, OR (by Skype).

**October 17**

Former Mayor Mitch Landrieu will deliver the first annual lecture in a new series named for Father Louis J. Twomey, SJ, Loyola pioneer for racial and social justice. The topic is Race, Poverty, and Politics—7pm at the College of Law, Room 405.



Migrants and refugees at San Ignacio, El Paso. October 2016. Courtesy of the Encuentro Project.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of the United Nations in 1948 recognized the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. [2] The *1951 Refugee Convention* of the U.N. defined a refugee as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." [3] Refugees, more than any other migrant, are entitled to legal protections, including the right to present their claim of refugee status to countries in which they seek asylum. Pope Francis, recognizing the underlying moral claim to asylum, strongly supports these rights. [4]

In 2016, the Obama Administration settled nearly 85,000 refugees. The outgoing Obama Administration set the 2017 cap for refugee admissions at 110,000; but fewer than half that number—53,000—were actually resettled. The 2018 cap then was set at 45,000, a record low; but only 22,000 were actually admitted. The 2019 cap was reduced to only 30,000; but *now the administration has announced the cap for 2020 at just 18,000!!!* [5]

#### Why is this a concern?

Fifteen months ago, over forty former diplomats, national security officials, and other leaders in U.S. efforts to address issues of conflict and displacement wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about our nation's response to today's refugee crisis as a matter of national security and humanitarian responsibility. They reminded Secretary Pompeo (and us) that: [6]

- The 1980 Refugee Act, enacted overwhelmingly by Congress, made clear that active refugee protection and assistance expressed U.S. global interests and was a vital tool of U.S. foreign policy.
- Even modest U.S. refugee resettlement levels can influence host governments around the world to provide safe haven, educational opportunities, and other forms of social integration to significantly larger populations of displaced people. This prevents forced returns of refugees and discourages onward migration to other countries – both of which can have destabilizing impacts on fragile regions.
- The U.S. refugee program also encourages other countries to provide resettlement opportunities for refugees and thereby lighten the load for host governments.

Despite their urgings, the Trump administration continues to undermine U.S. refugee law and longstanding U.S. humanitarian policy through cruel practices toward families seeking asylum, weakening the U.S. asylum process, and crippling the U.S. Refugee Admissions program. [7] Instead of leading the world, over the past 12 months the administration has accelerated measures to eliminate legal protections for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as to weaken the international system of humanitarian and refugee response. These have included:

- Systematic efforts to end asylum for large numbers of credible claimants at our southern border, including separation of children from parents.
- Rejection of international agreements on protection and management of migrants and refugees endorsed by an overwhelming majority of other governments.
- Proposals for massive cuts to U.S. international humanitarian assistance.

All of this is compounded by the absence of presidential leadership on efforts to respond to or even recognize massive human rights violations and forced migrations in places like Myanmar.

[1] UNHCR: The U.N. Refugee Agency. Retrieved from: <https://unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance>

[2] United Nations. (1948). *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 13.

[3] United Nations. (1951). *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. Article 1.

[4] See, for example, Pope Francis. (2018, January 14). *World Day of Migrants and Refugees Statement: Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting, and Integrating Migrants and Refugees*.

[5] Refugees International. (2019, September 9). *2019 Report Card: The Trump Administration's Performance on Refugee and Humanitarian Protection*. Retrieved from: <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019-administration-report-card>

[6] Refugees International. (2018, July 23). Letter retrieved from: <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2018/7/23/national-security-and-humanitarian-leaders-urge-secretary-pompeo-not-to-eliminate-state-department-refugee-office>

[7] Refugees International. (2019, September 9). *2019 Report Card*. Op. Cit.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to [jsri@loyno.edu](mailto:jsri@loyno.edu)

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