



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

November 25, 2013

The Honorable Rand Beers
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Honorable Beers:

As people of faith, Presbyterians recognize that we all bear the image of God, an image that should be honored and given the fullest respect and dignity. The United States has recognized that all people, by virtue of their simply being, have certain rights. At our very best we, as a country, have accorded each individual with certain protections under the law in order to give meaning to this belief in individual rights. Our notions of due process and basic human rights help ensure some the simplest of dignities and rights, especially to those who are most vulnerable.

Today, along our nation's borders, we see the individual having fewer rights and the values that we have long held diminished in the name of efficiency and "crime fighting." The Alien Transfer and Exit Program (ATEP) is just one practice that does violence to the image of God that we all bear and tramples on our history as a nation that values family unification.

This program repatriates some individuals to Mexico far from where they were seized by immigration agents. This practice, along with the dangerous hours at which individuals are abandoned at various locations along the border leaves them vulnerable and at an increased risk of victimization. While the stated goal of the program, to break up smuggling rings, is laudable, it has not been shown that ATEP disrupts smuggling rings.

In addition to the questions about its effectiveness, ATEP separates groups of people who rely on one another for safety. ATEP simply makes the journey more dangerous because individuals are isolated from their friends and family in an unknown part of the world.

It is time to stop this program and consider other more responsible means to stop human smuggling. Efforts that target the smugglers themselves would be much safer for migrants and local communities on both sides of the border. I urge you to end ATEP and think holistically about its risks to individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gradye Parsons".

Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

cc: President Barack Obama
The Honorable Thomas S. Winkowski