



UNA ★ USA
Iowa Division

Advocacy News

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Take the High Road

Listening to Voices from and about the Border

by Jane Shuttleworth

“Our grandfather saw the gang kill our neighbor. They threatened to kill him and so we all had to leave.”

“There were people who wanted to hurt us. There were people who had eyes on me whenever I went to school.”

- These are sworn testimonies from children held in the Clint Border Facility, Texas 2019.

“To become a refugee means that ones country has imploded, taking with it all the things that protect our humanity: a functional government, a mostly non-murderous police force, a reliable drinking water and food supply, an efficient sewage system...” - Viet Thanh Nguyen, novelist and refugee.

“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark ...”
Warsan Shire, poet and refugee.

“...we need to ensure we have laws on the books to keep dangerous people out of our country. We’ve seen horrific crimes committed by those trying to take advantage of our immigration system,

including horrendous things like sex trafficking, forced marriage, and even female genital mutilation.”

Senator Joni Ernst, “...every state is a border state,” October 15, 2021. “...reckless open border policies... are endangering Iowa communities...”

Representative Randy Feenstra, 2020 IA-4 House campaign website FeenstraForCongress.com, Aug 25, 2020

Giving or Muting Voices

We are living at the moment of greatest human displacement in the history of humankind. Apprehensions on the southern border hit a two-decade high this year. The push and pull factors that cause people to leave their homes and attract them to new locations continues to intensify with the impacts of the world wide pandemic, global climate change and wars. But in this moment, whose voices are we listening to?

After World War II, nation states banded together to negotiate the

United Nations Refugee Convention in 1951 with the promise that when people are fleeing persecution, they will be given a chance to present their claims of fear and an opportunity to present why they qualify as refugees. Are these voices being heard?

High Road, Low Road

Within the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration is the lead intergovernmental organization promoting humane and orderly immigration since 1951. The IOM describes two different scenarios available to governments to manage the migration process. The "low road scenario" is based on stereotypes, fear, and short-term political expediency and there is little or no effort to inform the public about the benefits of migration. The "high road scenario," on the other hand, calls for a comprehensive, human rights-based approach to migration management and calls for serious government effort to inform, educate and work with communities to abolish stereotypes, minimize discrimination,

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And Xenophobia, and to promote the economic and social contributions of migrants to society.

Trump and Biden Administrations: Which Scenario?

The Trump Administration clearly exemplified the “low road scenario,” focusing on restricting immigration by expanding southern border-wall construction and introducing policy initiatives that stigmatized and deported migrants and muted the voices of asylum-seekers without due process.

Biden came into office promising a more humane “high road” approach to immigration. Indeed, in his first days in office he stopped construction on the wall, ended the Muslim ban, and promised to revoke Trump-era policies. Nonetheless, the first eight months of his administration have seen constantly changing policies, situations and chaos on the southern border from the skyrocketing numbers of unaccompanied minors in early 2021 to the more recent horrific expulsion of Haitian immigrants at our southern border.

Sources of Border Chaos: MPP, Title 42

The Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP)—also referred to as Remain in Mexico—implemented under Trump allowed expulsion of asylum seekers to Mexico where they were expected to wait near the border for the duration of their

immigration proceedings, even if they weren't Mexican citizens, and where many fell prey to kidnapping, rape, human trafficking and other violence. MPP was implemented in early 2019, but the Trump administration curtailed its reliance on MPP in March 2020 with the introduction of a new pandemic era policy, Title 42 of the 1944 Public Health Service Policy Act. Title 42 allowed authorities to expel everyone at the border, not just vulnerable asylum seekers.

Biden suspended MPP when he came into office, and formally ter-

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minated it in June 2021 but a federal judge in Texas ordered Biden to reinstate the policy. In late September the Biden administration announced it would issue a new memorandum terminating MPP “in the coming weeks” but in October issued a statement it would reinstate MPP in mid November if Mexico agrees.

Biden has also come under criticism for continuing Title 42 to expel everyone at the border with the exception of unaccompanied

minors, a plan that some policy analysts suggest led to the surge of their numbers beginning earlier this year. Some Republicans have accused Biden of making our country unsafe. Governor Renyolds has joined other governors sending national guard troops to the border. In short, it has been disappointing and outrageous to see both parties come together to support the expulsion of asylum seekers and other migrants from our southern border.

Jane Shuttleworth is a UNA member from Lake Okoboji.

What Can We Do?

As citizens, it is up to us to use our voices to amplify the voices of the migrants and asylum seekers who are not being heard. Reach out to your elected officials and our president to let them know that you support immigrants and asylum seekers and especially children at the border. Remind Democratic representatives that Biden ran on a platform of a more humane America. Demand Republicans stop stereotyping non-Americans as lawless and remind them that seeking asylum is not illegal. Give them the political will to take the high road.

Afghan Evacuees Arrive in Iowa

by Caryl Lyons

On September 28, 2021, KCCI in Des Moines reported that within days, hundreds of Afghan evacuees would be arriving in Iowa, 125 of them coming to Des Moines. Others will be going to Cedar Rapids and to other urban areas in Iowa that have the resources to help them resettle. According to the Iowa Department of Human Services, although Iowa had reported having the capability to resettle 350, the number assigned to Iowa is 695.

In the chaotic but overall effective airlift from the Kabul airport, about 120,000 people, mostly Afghans, left on U.S. planes and flew to safety in various places, including Germany. From there, many Afghan refugees have already been flown to U.S. bases to await resettlement. From the bases, the evacuees have been or will be sent to communities around the United States that have agreed to accept them.

Two Groups of Afghan Refugees

Two groups of refugees exist. The first group comprises the ones who received Special Immigration Visas (SIVs) that are reserved for those interpreters, translators, and others who worked with the U.S. military. They will come to the U.S. as legal residents and can gain citizenship after five years.

The second group is coming under the Humanitarian Parole program: people brought to the U.S. “because of a compelling emergency in their

country of origin.” In Afghanistan, those risks can be religious, political, and/or cultural, and these people may or may not have worked with the U.S. in Afghanistan. Once they arrive here, they must apply for asylum.

Thorough Vetting

The U.S. Committee of Refugees and Immigrants points out that all of these refugees have been most thoroughly vetted. They have been through security screenings, interviews, background checks of both the refugees and their families, fingerprinting, Department of Defense forensic checks, and medical checks and vaccinations.

How to Help

In Des Moines, the **U.S. Committee of Refugees and Immigrants** (515-528-7525) is working on locating apartments, furniture, and general household goods (refugees.org/desmoines), while the **Refugee Alliance of Central Iowa, (RACI)** (515-344-1209) is helping with employment and schools (www.refugeeallianceofcentraliowa.org). Both organizations have ongoing needs for donations of cash, furniture, and/or gift cards to such places as Hy-Vee or Walmart.

Lutheran Services needs financial support and volunteers. Email: Meghan.Smith@LSIowa.org for volunteer questions and Nancy.Strutzenberg@LSIowa.org for donation questions or see [/lsiowa.org](http://lsiowa.org).

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Des Moines needs financial support and volunteers to provide transportation and to help set up apartments. You can contact Kelyn Anker at 515-237-5095 or see www.catholiccharitiesdm.org

Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center (EMBARC) plans to extend its programs to Afghan families as they arrive, including training for the workplace, employment, and economic self-sufficiency. See www.embarciowa.org

The Catherine McAuley Center in Cedar Rapids (319-363-4993) serves refugees, immigrants, and women experiencing crisis, according to their website. They help with translation, ESL for adults, and in applying for social and medical services, among other things. They are looking for donations and volunteers. See cmc-cr.org

Caryl Lyons is a member of the Iowa UNA Board of Directors and lives in North Liberty.

Number of Refugees Accepted by the U.S. Raised

President Biden has raised the number of refugees that the United States will accept. Last year, the number was at an all-time low of 15,000; Biden first raised it to 62,000 annually, and recently raised the number again to 125,000 annually. Communities and organizations were already preparing for additional refugees prior to the sudden evacuations from Afghanistan.

UN Climate Conference: Good News and Bad News

by Jozef Figa

The UN Climate Conference, held November 1-13, is over. This is good news and bad news. The conference final document, called the Glasgow Climate Pact, is good news. The goal of capping the planet's temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees Centigrade above the pre-industrial level has been maintained. The agreement asks governments to accelerate cuts in fossil fuel emissions. Governments also promised to curb emissions of methane gas. This pledge is promising and formidable: the sources of methane include livestock, oil and gas, landfills and waste, coal mining, rice cultivation, and the melting of permafrost. Finally, the agreement acknowledges the "loss and damage" to poor countries already caused by climate change.

This acknowledgement may also serve as an example of the challenges that the Glasgow Climate Pact is facing. The most vulnerable countries fought for the creation of a fund that would compensate them for losses. The United States, Australia, and European countries opposed the creation of this fund. In addition, rich countries failed to deliver on a previous agreement to pay poor countries \$100 billion to help pay for efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. At this point they are promising to start

payments in 2023.

Then there is the coal problem: China and India successfully pressed other participants to replace the statement about "phasing out" the use of coal to "phasing down." This left Samir Sharma, the chair of the conference, in tears and the leaders of island nations expressing desperation.

The major problem of the Glasgow Climate Pact is that it contains lots of promises with no guarantees they will be kept. Prior to the conference, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated that promises from the 2015 Paris Agreement have not been kept.

President Obama stated the same during the conference. Fulfilling the promises of the Glasgow Climate Pact will keep the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. This is important because the current trends, even with all of the attempts to contain greenhouse gas emissions, will result in an increase of 2.4 degrees by 2030.

A realistic focus for our ongoing climate advocacy would be curbing methane emissions and loss-and-damage payments. Also, rich countries must be urged to fulfill their promises by pointing out that global warming will result in a sharp increase in the number of climate refugees.

Jozef Figa of Cedar Rapids is the advocacy lead for the Linn County Chapter of the UNA.

We can act to reverse global warming

Communicate your concerns to elected officials.

Do what your budget permits to reduce your carbon footprint.

Commend the Biden-Harris administration for its commitment to climate action but urge even more ambitious policies and actions.

Organizations combatting climate change:

AVAAZ is a "global web movement to bring people-powered policies to decision-making." Consider signing their "Emergency Appeal on Climate" at secure.avaaz.org/page/en

Citizens Climate Lobby
citizensclimatelobby.org

Sierra Club, Iowa Chapter
www.sierraclub.org/iowa

Iowa Environmental Council
www.iaenvironment.org/our-work/healthy-climate

Iowa Physicians for Social Responsibility
www.psriowa.org

FYI: Afghan or Afghani?

Many of us don't know which word is the correct one to use when referring to people from Afghanistan. The correct word to use is **Afghan** people or just Afghans. The word "Afghani" refers to Afghanistan's currency. Afghans spend afghanis to buy things.

What Is a UN Special Rapporteur?

by Alice Dahle

One of the UN's great services to the world is the collection, organization and distribution of data that is accurate and comparable globally. This is especially difficult to accomplish in a subject area as abstract, and often controversial, as human rights.

When the original Commission on Human Rights was established at the UN, its purpose was to define and elaborate on international standards of human rights. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) actually passed a resolution stating that the Commission had "no power to take any action in regard to any complaints concerning human rights."

However, in 1965, the Commission on Human Rights, the forerunner of the current Human Rights Council, received numerous petitions demanding that they take action on the human rights situation in South Africa. In response, the Commission created an ad-hoc working group to investigate. This group became the first example of a mechanism called Special Procedures, which consists of independent experts who investigate, report, and advise on either thematic or country-specific human rights concerns.

The Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council consist of independent experts on a range of human rights issues, including civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Their mandate is to

investigate, report and advise on human rights concerns, either on a particular theme or in a particular country.

Special Procedures can be individual experts, called Special Rapporteurs or Independent Experts, or they can be a working group of five members, one from each of the UN's regional groups: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and the Western group.

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The Human Rights Council appoints Special Rapporteurs and members of Working Groups for terms of not more than six years. They can be nominated by their countries, but they work as independent experts, not as representatives of their home countries. Special Rapporteurs are not UN staff members, and in order to maintain their independence and impartiality,

they are not paid by either the UN or their own countries.

Special Rapporteurs investigate petitions alleging violations of human rights, provide technical advice, advocate to raise public awareness and write detailed reports. They must be invited by the relevant State to make in-country visits, but as of May 2020, 126 UN Member States and 1 non-Member Observer State have issued a standing invitation to thematic Special Procedures.

Special Procedures experts are selected for their expertise, experience in their field, independence, impartiality, personal integrity, and objectivity. Their work sometimes involves great personal risk, even including death threats, and requires great courage and commitment. As of September 2020, 44 thematic and 11 country mandates were actively investigating human rights issues as varied as arbitrary detention, human trafficking, violence against women, and the right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

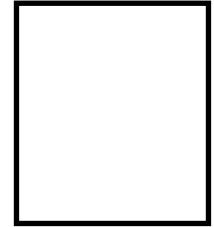
Although the UN's Special Rapporteurs and Special Procedures working groups are not well known to the public, their work is invaluable to those whose lives and human rights are at stake.

Alice Dahle is a member of the Linn County Chapter and a human rights activist.

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How to Contact Your Member of Congress

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Washington, DC 20006
www.whitehouse.gov/contact

Senator Charles Grassley (R)
135 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3744
www.grassley.senate.gov/contact

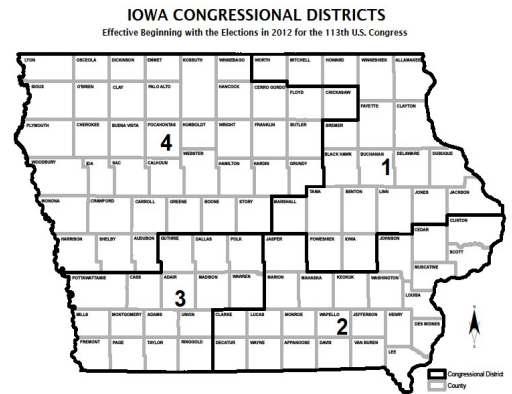
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New Districts coming up with the next election.

Write your Members of Congress

**It is important
to let them know your opinions!**

GO GREEN!

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