

Working Group on Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees A Proposal to the IAJU Assembly

The IAJU Task Force on Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees proposes to the Assembly delegates that every member school stand in solidarity with the world's migrants and refugees in a renewed and visible way. Specifically, we propose that our higher education institutions:

- Enter their school's current best practices into the emerging *Compendium of Best Practices for Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees* – and use the *Compendium* as a resource for generating additional, new initiatives and practices for solidarity on their own campus.
- Publicly commit themselves to the **Principles of Engagement** listed below, and actively engage the entire college/university community in this work.
- Encourage scholars at their institution to list their migration and refugee-related research in the [*IAJU Migration Research Directory*](#) – and rely on the *Directory* as a resource for institutional planning and inter-apostolic projects.

Finally, we believe that the possibilities for collaboration and serving the common good are immense, but they will not bear fruit without support. **We recommend to Fr. General the appointment of an IAJU Coordinator, or Coordinating Team, for promoting Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees.**

Reporting to the Secretary for Higher Education, Rev. Joseph Christie, S.J., the Coordinator's work would focus sharply on:

- a) Building *academic partnerships* in service of forcibly displaced persons and communities (i.e., meaningful research, undergraduate and graduate curricula, service/immersion experiences, and advocacy) among Jesuit colleges and universities;
- b) Strengthening Jesuit higher education's collaboration with JRS, Jesuit Migrant Services, GIAN Migration, Jesuit Worldwide Learning, and other Jesuit ministries directly addressing forced migration; and
- c) Developing the necessary networks and *infrastructure* for IAJU schools and other apostolic partners to communicate and collaborate in a timely and effective way.

There is already important and innovative work occurring in Jesuit schools, in the service of forcibly displaced persons. Now is the moment to build upon it – to stand in solidarity with those whose world has been upended and whose lives hang in the balance.

Principles of Engagement: The Commitment of IAJU Institutions to Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees

As a Jesuit institution of higher education, we commit ourselves to:

- **Responding Prayerfully and Intentionally to the Priority of Human Mobility**, as called for by the Society of Jesus and the Church;
- **Integrating a Commitment to Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees into the University's Strategic Planning to Research, Educate, and Transform;**
- **Serving the Local Community**, especially those who have been displaced, those who work to integrate them into local communities, and those who make choices affecting their lives;
- **Networking within and across Jesuit Ministries That Focus on Forced Migration** by partnering with Jesuit Refugee Service, Jesuit Migrant Services, Jesuit Worldwide Learning, GIAN Migration, MAIN, and/or other apostolates of the Society of Jesus;
- **Taking a Holistic Approach and Employing an Integral Strategy** to put the resources of the university at the service of the common good, in response to the Universal Apostolic Preferences (i.e., Walking with the Excluded, Journeying with Youth, Showing the Way to God, Caring for Our Common home, and Engaging in the Work of Reconciliation and Justice);
- **Educating Students** within and outside the classroom on the reality of human mobility – and promoting the values of dignity, solidarity, participation, compassion, hospitality, hope and justice;
- **Putting Social Research at the Service of Apostolic Leadership** by building communities of research and discernment among Migration institutions and social centers, where refugees are part of research teams from a project's inception; and
- **Involving the entire university community** in the commitment to migrants and refugees.

Context for this Proposal

At the heart of every Jesuit apostolate is the call to enter without hesitation into the heart and mission of Christ. That mission calls us clearly toward all of the Universal Apostolic Preferences, and especially to **Walk with the Excluded**:

We see the gap between rich and poor widen across the world and we hear weekly reports of hundreds perishing as they try to reach a new home. Political leaders have kindled hatred and erected walls between rich and poor, young and old, those at home and those who have to migrate....

Walking with the excluded implies that IAJU institutions commit our schools to solidarity with the more than 100 million people who today are forcibly displaced from their homes by violence, political instability, economic injustice, climate change, and other devastating realities. Fr. Arrupe's establishment of the Jesuit Refugee Service in 1980 represents a key turning point in the Society's journey of solidarity with refugees. Today, we face a renewed call to action and solidarity with those who are forced to flee their homes. As Pope Francis reminds us, we are called *to build the future with migrants and refugees*. "If we want to cooperate with our heavenly Father in building the future, let us do so together with our brothers and sisters who are migrants and refugees. Let us build the future today!" (WDMR 2022)

Living Our Ignatian Heritage

Ignatius of Loyola experienced a strong inner call to be like the poor and humble Jesus: living in the open, itinerant, and driven toward those on the margins whom he encountered in the Gospel. This spiritual desire led Ignatius to a real closeness to the poor. Service to the excluded characterized his life from the time of his conversion in Loyola and accompanied the development of the nascent Society of Jesus.

For Ignatius, and for us, closeness and service to the poor leads to friendship with Christ and generates a new family with them. Ignatius wrote to the Jesuits of Padua (1547) that "friendship with the poor makes us friends of the eternal King". This whole tradition of closeness and service to the poor was taken up, among other works, by the Jesuit Refugee Service, whose motto is "to accompany, serve and defend". Similarly, other institutions such as the Jesuit Migrant Service, Jesuit Migrant Network, and Global Ignatian Advocacy Network have developed this mission in varying contexts.

More recently, the second Universal Apostolic Preference moves the Society to "walk alongside the poor, the discarded of the world, those whose dignity is violated in a mission of reconciliation and justice." The Preference implies that we are to go with them, trusting in their creativity, courage, and abilities. It calls explicitly for a "change in the economic, political and social structures that generate injustice," underscoring the need for "attention to migrants, displaced persons, refugees, victims of war and human trafficking."

The Root of the Problem – and Our Response

Human mobility is a perduring trait of humanity. For millennia, people have moved to other places in search of opportunities and better livelihoods. In recent decades, migration and forced migration have

gained more visibility and attention, revealing a range of migration systems and humanitarian crises. These situations have elicited diverse reactions from governments. The vast majority of people migrate internationally for a mix of intersecting reasons – the decision to migrate is almost never because of a single motive. Sometimes people move because of work, family, and/or study, involving migration processes that occur uneventfully for migrants and destination countries. At other times, people leave their countries for clear and compelling reasons such as hunger, lack of opportunities to earn a dignified livelihood, social violence, or climate shocks. A case could be made that these situations constitute a type of forced migration, even if in some cases affected migrants are not granted international protections. Finally, there are circumstances in which people leave their homes because of conflict, persecution, and disaster, becoming refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced people (IDPs).

Most current discussions of migration mention the unprecedented numbers of migrants globally, but understanding changes, emerging trends, and contexts help us to make sense of how and why people move throughout the world. In 2020, the estimate of international migrants was around 281 million people, which is approximately 3.6 percent of the world’s population – a small minority in relative terms. Staying within one’s country of birth remains the norm. Nevertheless, while most people do not migrate across borders, a large number of people do move within their own countries. With millions of Ukrainians internally displaced in 2022 and further displaced to other countries, the total number of forcibly displaced people now exceeds 100 million. **This means that 1 in 78 people on Earth have been forced to flee their homes** -- a major milestone few would have expected a decade ago.

An estimated 53.2 million people were living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence by the end of 2020. Within this number, 30.9 million people are located in just ten countries, including Syria, Colombia, and the DRC. Furthermore, by the end of 2021 there were 27.1 refugees throughout the world and 4.6 million people waiting for a decision on their applications for asylum.

In considering these figures, it is important to keep in mind that the number of international migrants has remained stable in the last three decades, though, there has been a recent, slight increase in the speed with which that number has grown. The top 10 countries of destination in 2021 host half of all international migrants. Those countries are:

- the United States,
- Germany,
- Saudi Arabia,
- the Russian Federation,
- the United Kingdom,
- the United Arab Emirates,
- France,
- Canada,
- Australia, and
- Italy.

While Europe and the United States continue to host the largest number of international migrants, migrant populations have grown recently in Northern Africa, Western Asia, and in sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, most international migrants move to other countries within their region of birth, creating migration zones throughout the world. For example, more international migrants from the global South reside in the South than in the North. Furthermore, migration policies have become less restrictive for some and more difficult for others, easing the movement of those often considered to be highly skilled

migrants, while limiting the movement of those who are less skilled or poor. Complicating these circumstances, forced migration has grown much faster than voluntary migration. An often-overlooked dimension of the situation lies in the fact that a more comprehensive approach to migration and refugees needs to include *return migration patterns* – especially addressing those processes that include criminalization of migrants, deportation and removal from destination countries, and reintegration to home countries.

In sum, migration is not a problem that needs to be solved. People have moved and will continue moving because migration is part of a larger process of social transformation. When discussing migration and refugee issues, it is easy to stress numbers, statistics, and governmental responses. But in practice, **when we talk about migration and refugees we talk about people. We talk about concrete persons with needs, desires, challenges, histories, and families. If there is a problem with migration, it resides with the ways people move or the circumstances that force people to move.** The problem resides with boats capsizing and people drowning. It resides with people dying in the desert, in search for better lives. It resides with people stranded at the borders of the world because they cannot access international protection. It resides with all the violence that forces people to leave their homes internally or internationally.

Viewed “from the ground,” any scenario intended to address forced migration and its associated humanitarian crises demands multiple responses and types of accompaniment ranging from humanitarian interventions, legal support, public health and psychosocial interventions, community engagement, educational programs, advocacy efforts, and policy analysis. While many humanitarian organizations respond to the needs of displaced persons, **institutions of higher education are in a distinctive position to respond to the pleas of migrants and refugees.** In addition to their institutional heft, colleges and universities bring a wide network of collaborators and a wealth of intellectual resources to this essential relationship of solidarity.

Mindful of the needs of forcibly displaced persons, the current the best practices of our schools, and the opportunities for Jesuit higher education to collaborate further, **we invite all IAJU institutions to commit themselves to the Principles of Engagement above, which undergird our Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees:**

An Invitation

In the Contemplation to Attain Divine Love at the close of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius reminds us that all is Gift. In response to the deep and unending generosity of God, the retreatant is invited to offer the entirety of themselves in a return of gratitude. Similarly, Jesuit colleges and universities are recipients and instruments of God’s grace. Even those that struggle economically or are subject to grinding political pressures are, in heroic ways, instruments of God’s grace. What then, does it mean to return our full selves to God as IAJU institutions? Surely standing in solidarity with children, women, and men who have been forced from their homes and lives must take a place of prominence in the renewed purpose of our schools. We invite every IAJU institution to discern a path of solidarity and hope.