



The Most Reverend **Francis Y. Kalabat**, Bishop of St. Thomas the Apostle Chaldean Catholic Eparchy of the U.S.A., shares an update on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) activities on immigration issues that have developed in recent months. The following memorandum is from Reverend Monsignor J. Brian Bransfield, General Secretary of the USCCB, which was sent to all U.S. Bishops.

July-August 2019 USCCB Activities on Immigration Issues

- On July 19th, following a report in [Politico](#) that the Refugee Resettlement program may be “zeroed out,” Bishop Joe S. Vásquez, Chair of the Committee on Migration, responded saying that the closing of this program is “[against the principles we have as a nation.](#)” Bishop Vásquez also stated: “I strongly oppose any further reductions of the refugee resettlement program. Offering refuge to those fleeing religious and other persecution has been a cornerstone of what has made this country great and a place of welcome. Eliminating the refugee resettlement program leaves refugees in harm’s way and keeps their families separated across continents.”
- On July 25th, Bishop Vásquez called for [Reversal of the Expansion of Expedited Removal](#), citing family separation and lack of due process among concerns. The Bishop stated: “this action is yet another escalation of this Administration’s enforcement-only immigration approach, and it will have terrible human consequences. The new policy will allow for the deportation of many more individuals without providing them an opportunity to seek legal counsel and have a hearing before an immigration judge. The implementation of this new policy will have unjust and unacceptable results and lead to more widespread family separation, stoking fear in our communities.”
- On August 8th, Bishop Vásquez, Bishop Frank J. Dewane, Chair of the Committee of Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Shelton Fabre, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, released a statement that expressed their [deep concern about racism and xenophobia that apparently motivated this weekend’s massacre in El Paso](#) and that have motivated numerous other recent mass shootings in the United States. “The tragic loss of life of 22 people this weekend in El Paso demonstrates that hate-filled

rhetoric and ideas can become the motivation for some to commit acts of violence. The anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitic sentiments that have been publicly proclaimed in our society in recent years have incited hatred in our communities. Hatred and harsh rhetoric were echoed in the El Paso shooter's explanation about why he committed this weekend's shooting, as well as being evident in the motivation of the shooters who attacked the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh last year and the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston in 2015. We, therefore, renew our call to all to act swiftly to stop using hate-filled language that demeans and divides us and motivates some to such horrific violence. Instead, we ask our leaders and all Americans to work to unite us as a great, diverse, and welcoming people."

- On August 12th, Bishop Vásquez released a statement opposing a rule that would [nearly eviscerate our currently asylum law](#). "The rule would turn our back on the vast majority of asylum seekers, requiring them to apply for protection in almost any other country through which they transit, leaving access to U.S. asylum exceptionally rare. Not only do we believe that this rule is unlawful, but it also jeopardizes the safety of vulnerable individuals and families fleeing persecution and threatens family unity. Further, the rule undermines our nation's tradition of being a global leader providing and being a catalyst for others to provide humanitarian protection to those in need. We remind the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security that how we respond to asylum seekers arriving at our border is a test of our moral character and strongly urge the Administration to rescind this rule." USCCB submitted comments during a 30-day period while the rule was being proposed and those comments can be [found here](#).
- On August 13th, Bishop Vásquez released a joint statement with Bishop Dewane opposing a [final rule](#) on "public charge" put forth by the Department of Homeland Security. "This rule will undermine family unity and lead many lawful immigrants to forgo vital assistance, including enrollment in nutrition, housing, and medical programs. Families already in the U.S. will be faced with deciding whether to access critical assistance programs for which they qualify, knowing that in doing so they could jeopardize their ability to stay here with their loved ones. And, it will reduce the ability of many to reunify with family in the U.S. We have already seen the culture of fear that the anticipation of this rule has created in our communities. Ultimately, we believe that this rule is in tension with the dignity of the person and the common good that all of us are called to support."