Blog



Migrants sit against a levee wall after being apprehended by U.S. Border Patrol agents near Penitas, Texas, on Oct. 8, 2019, after they entered the United States illegally. (CNS/Reuters/Loren Elliott)



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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a weekly feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*



A new joint report by Network, a Catholic lobby for social justice, and the Kino Border Initiative titled "Due Process Denied" details 35 cases in which the Customs and Border Protection agency in Nogales, Arizona, has committed violations. The abuses in the report, according to Kino's interviews with immigrants, include denying migrants due process in seeking asylum, destruction of documentation, and physical violence.

"These complaints against Border Patrol agents show the systemic and inhumane treatment of some of the most vulnerable people who arrive at our southwest border and a failure by CBP to follow due process," Sr. Tracey Horan, a Sister of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, and assistant director of education and advocacy for Kino said in a press release. "This is a moral failing in our country and an utter rejection of Jesus's call to 'love one another.' "

Ronnate Asirwatham, government relations director for Network, said though the report is a "snapshot" of the migrant experience, the details of "inhumane treatment, lying [and] family separation" illustrate a "broader pattern of abuse."

"We need external oversight to end CBP's systemic culture of abuse of migrants and restore clear and transparent access to asylum," she said in the press release.

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This report comes on the heels of the U.S. Supreme Court's Aug. 24 decision denying a stay that would have temporarily halted the reinstatement of the Migrant Protection Protocols, also known as the "Remain in Mexico" policy.

Anna Gallagher, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. (CLINIC), said continuing this Trump-era policy will "deepen human suffering and continue to erode U.S. law and values at the U.S.-Mexico border."

The policy, which President Joe Biden had rescinded earlier this year, forced asylum-seekers and refugees to await their court dates in Mexican border cities.

" 'Remain in Mexico' is an assault on human rights and U.S. asylum law, and both are already under attack due to the Biden administration's decision to keep Title 42 in place," Gallagher said in a CLINIC press release, which also highlighted human rights abuses that have happened to migrants as they await their hearings in Mexico.

"CLINIC and our affiliates, like so many across this country, stand ready to welcome," she continued. "Our message to the Biden administration at this critical moment is clear: we will hold you to your promise to restore the soul of America. To do so, you must take immediate action to end Remain in Mexico."



Toppled pews in the remains of St. Famille du Toirac church in Toirac, Haiti, on Aug. 16. The magnitude 7.2 earthquake that hit Haiti on Aug. 14 killed 20 people during a funeral Mass at the church. (CNS/Reuters/Laura Gottesdiener)

Sister-led organization offers clean water to quake-battered Haiti

By putting clean water filters in the hands of new "water women" in the southeastern peninsula of Haiti, Water With Blessings hopes to eventually provide clean water to 50,000 people. The operation, which has an immediate goal of distributing 2,500 Sawyer PointOne filters, began Aug. 23 in response to the Aug. 14 earthquake that struck the Caribbean island.

The Water With Blessings team is starting off by dispersing 450 filters in L'Asile, a remote area of Haiti that has so far not received any assistance.

"We think we will be the first organization to provide aid there," the press release said, adding that the group plans to expand to other hard-to-reach regions in Haiti.

The organization, founded by Ursuline Sr. Larraine Lauter, hopes to raise $150,000 to cover the costs of the shipping, buckets, and training in Haiti.

"This is the best way to address this terrible challenge. It is simply not possible to ship enough water in plastic containers to keep people healthy," the press release states.

Those interested in donating other items can also visit this "Call to Action for Haiti" checklist.



A screenshot of the virtual 102nd birthday celebration that Loyola University Chicago threw Aug. 21 for Sr. Jean Dolores Schmidt, a Sister of the Charity of Blessed Virgin Mary and the chaplain for the university's men's basketball team (Courtesy of Jill Geisler)

Loyola University's Sr. Jean Dolores Schmidt turns 102

Sr. Jean Dolores Schmidt, who rose to fame as the unofficial mascot of Loyola University Chicago, turned 102 on Aug. 21, and the Loyola alumni club threw a virtual birthday party in honor of their beloved chaplain. More than 130 people attended the gathering, which included videotaped messages from her friends and alumni. More than 2,000 sent birthday wishes.

Schmidt became a media celebrity in 2018, when the underdog Loyola men's basketball team went to the Final Four in the NCAA Tournament. Schmidt, a member of the Sisters of the Charity of Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, Iowa, has served as team chaplain since 1994. She's since been memorialized in Lego and bobblehead form and still garners headlines and media attention.

During the pandemic, Schmidt had kept up with the team digitally, sending inspirational prayers and Scripture passages.

In March, Schmidt, who was fully vaccinated, received special permission from Loyola administrators to attend the 2021 tournament, which was held in the Indianapolis area to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19. Loyola made it to the Sweet Sixteen.

Related: Q & A with Sr. Jean Dolores Schmidt on life returning to normal after the Final Four

Four sisters in Philippines die of COVID-19; archbishop tests positive

Of the 24 Carmelite sisters who tested positive for the coronavirus along with nine monastery staff in the La Paz district of Iloilo City, Philippines, four have died as of Aug. 25.

According to the Visayan Daily Star, the positive results of the monastery's 33 residents prompted the Iloilo City government to lock down the entire monastery July 25.

Meanwhile, the archbishop of Jaro in Iloilo, Jose Romeo Lazo, has tested positive for COVID-19 despite being fully vaccinated. The 72-year-old is in stable condition at the hospital in Iloilo City and appears to have passed the virus to his driver alone.



"Exploring Intersections: Catholic Sisters on Racism, Migration and Climate" will be at 3 p.m. Central time Sept. 8. (GSR screenshot)

LCWR Region 10 to host conversation on economic justice

A panel of experts will explore the challenges of creating a just economic system in a public discussion at 3 p.m. Central time Sept. 8.

"Exploring Intersections: Catholic Sisters on Racism, Migration and Climate" is a collaborative project of the sisters of Region 10 of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, who are leading a conversation every month on those topics as part of LCWR's ongoing resolution to address those three issues. (Region 10 includes congregations in Iowa, eastern Missouri and Nebraska, and part of Wisconsin.)

More information can be found on Exploring Intersections' website.

Related: Partnerships strengthen sisters' clean water projects worldwide