



Quaker United Nations Office

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General Debate Item 2 – Lethal Disregard for People on the Move

Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) congratulates you on your appointment [as High Commissioner for Human Rights] and thanks you for fruitful collaboration in your previous roles.

Your predecessor spoke powerfully of the lethal disregard for people on the move, the deadly consequences of which are daily realities. We may not know if those who die in transit were entitled to international protection as refugees, but we do know that whatever their status and whatever their reason for seeking to cross a border they were human beings with human rights. We look to you to be an advocate for them and with them.

As Juliana Macedo do Nascimento of United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led network in the US, told me last month “those closest to the problem are closest to the solution”. You and your Office can play a vital role in bridging the gap between those closest to the impacts and solutions and those closest to decision making.

Solutions, including dismantling dangerous deterrence-based policies, are urgently needed. Over 21,000 people are recorded to have died in migration during the last four years and it is widely acknowledged that the real figure is far higher. Concerted collective action is needed to ensure that this will not be the case in the next four years.

Building on the unwavering commitment and valuable work of your Office’s Migration Unit, strong leadership from you and your Office includes:

- Speaking out in defence of the human rights of all people on the move both publicly and in private at the highest levels.
- Emphasising that borders are not zones of exclusion for human rights, including by enhancing independent human rights monitoring at borders¹
- Addressing narratives of fear that see people more as a risk than at risk, [including through your Stand Up for Migrants campaign]²

How would you like to see this Council step up and play its role in ending lethal disregard?

*** ENDS ***

Delivered by Laurel Townhead

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¹ Including through operationalisation of the recently published Chapter 26: Monitoring and Protecting Human Rights in the Context of Migration in the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Manual on Human Rights Monitoring <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2022-11-14/Chapter26-Monitoring-Protecting-HR-Migration.pdf>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/campaigns/stand-up-for-migrants>