



CONTACT: Andrea Guerrero
(619) 405-0620



COMISION NACIONAL DE LOS
DERECHOS HUMANOS
M E X I C O



CONTACT: Rob Donnelly
(619) 260-4148

ACLU-San Diego and Mexico's Human Rights Commission Announce Agreement to Protect Migrants' Human Rights on Border

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SAN DIEGO – In a historic agreement to pursue joint strategies to protect the human rights of migrants moving across the Mexico-United States border, the ACLU of San Diego & Imperial Counties and the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos today signed a document declaring common goals and principles to address the serious human rights issues.

The Memorandum of Agreement between the two organizations charges the parties jointly to explore legal actions to challenge Operation Gatekeeper and other programs that have contributed to migrant deaths, and to educate a transnational audience about the issue of human rights tragedies at the border. More than \$30 billion dollars have been spent on Gatekeeper since its inception, but the program has done little to prevent illegal entries—it has simply shifted them to the mountains and deserts east of San Diego, where migrants face much harsher conditions in remote, environmentally hostile areas.

The agreement was developed in reaction to the continually mounting death toll of now more than 5,000 migrants along the border, as well as the challenge of advocating on these issues effectively from just one side of the border. With respect to abuses by federal law enforcement agencies, for example, U.S. federal agencies have acted with immunity and a complete lack of transparency.

Kevin Keenan, Executive Director of the ACLU-San Diego and Dr. José Luis Soberanes, President of the Comisión, signed the agreement at the “Justice in Mexico: Evaluating National and Local Strategies” conference at the [Joan Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice](#), University of San Diego.

“Through this collaboration we hope to build bridges of understanding and justice, and tear down walls of prejudice and hate,” said Dr. Soberanes. “It is intolerable that our two civilized nations have allowed so many deaths of migrants along the border since the adoption of Operation Gatekeeper,” said Keenan. “By working together with Mexico’s Human Rights Commission, we will hold our governments to account in ways that we could not do alone.” David Shirk, Director of the Trans-Border Institute that hosted the conference, said, “We are pleased to serve as the backdrop for the signing of this historic agreement, and hope that this partnership will lead to a reversal of the tragic trends that have plagued our two nations in recent years.”

The agreement calls for the organizations to host an invitation-only conference of experts in June to focus on bi-national advocacy strategies for attacking inhumane policies affecting migrants, especially deaths from border crossings; to meet again following the U.S. elections in November to update its plans; to cooperate on other lawsuits, advocacy efforts, and educational campaigns on a case-by-case basis; and to seek funding for these efforts in their respective countries. The ACLU of San Diego is not receiving funding from any Mexican source for its work.

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