

## **Closing U.S. Southern Border to Those Most in Need is Unlawful, Immoral**

**ST. PAUL, Minn. and WASHINGTON** — The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) today issued a statement calling for the United States' borders to remain open to the pursuit of asylum.

“The COVID-19 outbreak is a powerful reminder of our common humanity, and the importance of embracing it, especially during times of crisis. Acting responsibly and compassionately to keep others safe is not only a moral imperative, but also the best way to keep all of us safe.

“Closing the United States' borders to asylum seekers—and the many thousands of torture survivors among them—as reports suggest the Trump administration is poised to do, would fly in the face of that fundamental truth. It would also be unlawful.

“The risk animating this potential policy shift—that the mass detention of asylum seekers would further spread the COVID-19 virus—is based on a false premise; such detention has never been necessary, or humane. Using existing legal authority, asylum seekers can and should be paroled into the United States, where many have family, faith or other community ties capable of providing housing and other forms of support.

“International law allows states to adopt sensible public health measures in times like these, such as screening on arrival for COVID-19 and the use of quarantine for those identified as suffering from the virus or who may have been exposed. However, all such measures must be non-discriminatory as well as necessary, proportionate and reasonable to the aim of protecting public health. International law is equally clear any such measures may not result in denying those in need of protection an effective opportunity to seek asylum, or in their return to persecution.

“In the most fundamental ways, we rise and fall as a people—not just Americans, all of us—based on our willingness to practice the golden rule: treat others the way we would want them to treat us. That is the spirit with which our government's decisions must be taken, and we hope everyone's will be taken, as we face the COVID-19 pandemic together.” — Curt Goering, CVT executive director.

-###-

*The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org).*