



**NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN COMMUNITIES**  
**ALIANZA NACIONAL DE COMUNIDADES LATINO AMERICANAS Y CARIBEÑAS**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
LAURIE R. GLENN  
[773.704.7246](tel:773.704.7246)  
[lrglenn@thinkincstrategy.com](mailto:lrglenn@thinkincstrategy.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2014**

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**CAPITOL HILL RELEASE OF FACT FINDING MISSIONS REPORT ON**  
**STATE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN CHILDREN**  
***Nat'l Delegations Call on US and Central American Governments to***  
***Protect Children and Stop Human Rights Violations***

**WASHINGTON, DC** - Members of three Fact-Finding Delegations of Immigrant-Rights leaders to Central America reported on preliminary findings of patterns of ongoing violence targeting children in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Delegation members encountered busloads of children and families forcibly returned to the region, after being detained in Mexico on the way to the U.S, with little to no infrastructure for protection or re-integration of these vulnerable people. Delegations encountered widespread reports of forced recruitment into gangs, and sexual violence toward young girls. Interviews with deportees and the faith based and civil society organizations working with them, pointed out again and again how ill-equipped governments in the region are to re-integrate returning migrants, especially those with trauma to the same violent circumstances.

In an emotional personal story, Margarita told of her family's odyssey from Lempira, Honduras, where she was robbed and received death threats. When the local crime bosses threatened to kill her 7-year old son, Darling, she finally fled with him to the Boston area, where she awaits word on her request for humanitarian protection.

Immigrants' rights leaders from across the country, under the leadership of the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities organized three delegations to the region this summer. *"The nation was shocked this summer, as tens of thousands of children arrived in the United States seeking refuge from violence and insecurity in Central America. Although the dramatic images may have faded from the public eye in the United States, our delegations discovered that the situation in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala remains dire,"* reported **Oscar Chacón, NALACC's Executive Director.**

**Lariza Dugan-Cuadra, Director of CARECEN San Francisco** participated in two of those delegations, to Honduras and El Salvador. She noted, *"we found at least three inter-linked causes to this problem: structural inequality that drives profound and on-going poverty; structural violence that pervades all aspects of society; and the desperation of long-separated families, driven by outdated and family unfriendly US immigration policies and systems."* *"If we don't address all these problems",* she continued, *"we should expect more people seeking refuge."*

**Abel Nuñez, from CARECEN DC, and a participant in the delegation to El Salvador** stated that *"In the short term, the conditions for safe return do not exist for many children and families."* *"Our delegation found a profound lack of institutional capacity to respond to the challenge of re-integrating children and families who have been forcibly removed from the United States or apprehended in transit in Mexico,"* added Nuñez.

President Obama has stated his intent to swiftly deport children and families appealing for humanitarian relief. **Linda Hartke from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service** responded that *"We cannot accept any response by the administration or Congress that seeks to forcibly and indiscriminately return these refugee children, who have made perilous and courageous journeys, back into a maelstrom of conflict and criminal violence."* *"As people of faith, we stand by American and faith-based values of welcome, freedom, safety and due process when it comes to the tens of thousands of children seeking refuge as they flee Central America,"* she continued.

Speaking from the perspective of a lead non-governmental agency in Honduras working to protect Children, **Jose Guadalupe Ruelas from Casa Alianza Honduras, commented,** *"the increase in unaccompanied child migrants results from the lack of implementation of human security policies on the part of the state. It is the product of social exclusion, structural violence, street crime, and organized crime, as well as the failures of government institutions to protect and safeguard the most vulnerable children in Honduras,"* concluded Ruelas.

Speakers called on the US government to mobilize resources to guarantee legal representation for vulnerable children and adults, but recognized that many may not obtain legal counsel in time to stop deportation. *"The Obama Administration should use its authority to issue a class-wide protection program to ensure that*

*no one is sent back to face violence or even death in their country of origin," asserted Oscar Chacón*

### ***Urge Central American Governments to Take Immediate Measures***

Speakers also urged the governments of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala to take immediate measures to protect and support the thousands of forcibly returned migrants, in collaboration with the civil society and faith based actors who have been most active in working directly with children. Finally, speakers warned of the dangers of using the current violence as a pretext for increased militarization of police forces and heavy handed responses. *"We need forward-looking solutions that make our countries safe and healthy places to raise our families and prosper, not more guns," stated Chacón.*

### **Speakers at the Press Conference included:**

- **Oscar Chacón, Executive Director, NALACC**
- **Linda Hartke, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**
- **Jose Guadalupe Ruelas, Casa Alianza, Honduras**
- **Lariza Dugan-Cuadra, Central American Resource Center, San Francisco**
- **Abel Nuñez, CARECEN-DC**
- **Margarita - A Boston Mother from Honduras**
- **Rev. Sarabeth Goodwin, St. Stephen's Latino Missioner, Washington, DC**

### **About NALACC**

*NALACC is a network of community-based; Latino and Caribbean immigrant-led organizations in the US that seeks to raise the quality of life for immigrant communities in the United States, as well as communities in migrant-sending countries in Latin America. Over the years, NALACC has built close working relationships with key civil society organizations throughout Latin America. For more information go to [www.nalacc.org](http://www.nalacc.org) and Facebook "nalacc2004"*

###