



**WE NEED YOU**

# **PREEMPTIVE LOVE BORDER RESPONSE**



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**Thank you for showing up for asylum seekers on the border.**

You are choosing to love anyway, even in the face of a complex, polarizing issue. To love anyway, to end war, we choose to step into hard conversations, to listen to different opinions, and to show up for those who need it most. Here's a short guide to help you learn more about this crisis and how we can involve our families, friends, and neighbors, too.

# KID TALK

**Talking to kids about an issue as complex as the border can be difficult.**

Here's a suggestion of how you can start the conversation with them, as well as some activities you can complete together. Show your kids this map of Central America. Most refugees are fleeing Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala—point out these countries to your kids. Then point out the US-Mexico border.



**If you had to leave home and could only take 1 item, what would it be?**

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## What you can share with your kids as you look at the map together:

It's really hard for families in these countries. They have a hard time finding jobs and making money. Sometimes they don't have enough to eat or a place to live. Often, they don't feel safe where they live. It can be very dangerous for their kids.

These families have heard that it's safer in the US, where we live. People have food and jobs. And most people aren't scared every day.

“We want these families to know they are loved”

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1.

So families are walking a long, long way to get to the US-Mexico border. It might take them months to get here. They're hoping they can come into the US. They want to work and make a new life for their families, where they're safe and have a place to live and food to eat. They don't want to be scared every day.



2.

Once they get to the border, they can't just cross into the US and find a new place to live. They have to ask permission to get in. Then they have to wait a long time for their turn to find out if they can come in. But they still don't have a place to live or money to buy food.



3.

Because they're walking a long, long way, they can't bring much. We're packing backpacks to send to a family so they can have the things they need to be clean, to eat, and to get dressed. There are a lot of kids just like you and they need clean socks and a toothbrush. They need a toy or a stuffed animal to help them feel better.



4.

We want these families to know they are loved and we want them to have what they need. We have enough food to eat every day and a nice place to live. We feel safe. We want other families to feel safe, too.

# GROUP ACTIVITIES



Donate to buy a ready-made backpack on the Preemptive Love website. <https://preemptivelove.org/help-asylum-seekers/>



If you're packing your own backpacks, shop together for the items. Talk about why you are making these bags and how families at the border might need the items in the kit.



Take out a map, and show the migration process of your family to America. Then share the process of refugees coming from Honduras.



Sleep outside as a family or group to replicate the conditions of migrant families as they wait at the border.

# GET INVOLVED AT HOME

Talk to those in your community to find out if there are any families who need support, including:



School administration  
offices



Food pantries



Immigration-specific  
ministries or organizations

# MORE RESOURCES

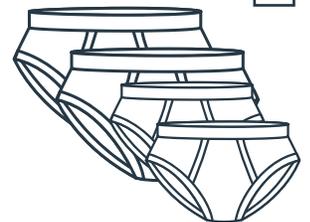
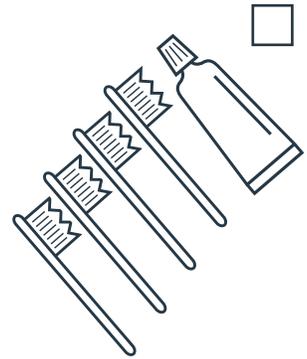
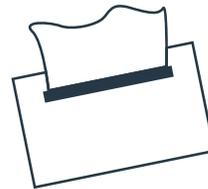
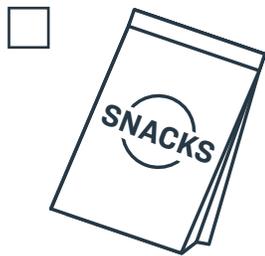


- [What is the Difference Between a Refugee, Migrant, and Asylum Seeker?](#)
- [Love Anyway Podcast, Episode 4: The Border Wall](#)
- [The Privilege of Migration for Some](#)
- [You Don't Have to Tear Families Apart to Secure the Border](#)
- [When America is Your Home But Not Your Country](#)
- [Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants: Three Reasons People Flee Home](#)

# WHAT TO PACK

In a school-sized, sturdy backpack suitable for traveling, please pack the following items:

- 1 Plastic reusable water bottle
- Granola bars or other non-perishable foods for a family of 4
- 1 of each size socks: (2-8yr child) (8-15 yr child) (medium women) (medium men)
- 1 small or medium sports bra
- 2 pairs (XS, S, or M) men's underwear
- 2 pairs (S/4 or M/5) women's underwear
- 1 of each size (2-8yr) (8-15 yr) children's socks and underwear
- Travel toiletries: 4 toothbrushes, 1 toothpaste, 1 hairbrush, 1 deodorant, 1 shampoo, 1 conditioner, 1 razor, lip balm, 1 pack baby wipes
- 1 small toy: superhero characters, cars, small dolls, animals or English language learning picture books



## SHIP YOUR BACKPACK TO:

Preemptive Love  
Attn Asylum Seekers at the Border  
532 E. Yandell Dr. | El Paso, TX 79902

# FAQS

## **Why is an Iraq-based organization responding to a US crisis?**

For years, we've served on the frontlines of conflict and crisis. This work has taken us far beyond Iraq—into Syria, Libya, Israel and Palestine, and the United States.

Because the frontlines aren't just in far-off places “over there.” The frontlines are where we live.

We work to end war and violence, to heal all that's tearing us apart—wherever we are.

The US-Mexico border is our frontline. We have years of expertise serving those displaced by violence, and we're bringing that to the border as we come alongside local friends who've spent years caring for migrant families here. We're using what we know to build local capacity to meet this crisis head on.

## **Is this about President Trump's border wall or US immigration policy?**

No. This isn't about politics. It's about people. It's about our posture—what kind of people we want to be—more than what positions we take.

We believe it's possible to care about border security and the well-being of asylum seekers. We believe it's possible for Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, and people of all positions and affiliations to show up for those in need.

The humanity of our Central American friends isn't measured by their immigration status—and neither should our willingness to meet their most basic needs.

## **Are you helping people who came here illegally?**

The families we're helping came to the US legally.

They presented themselves to a US official at the border and requested asylum, in keeping with US policy under the Trump administration. They are processed by Customs and Border Patrol, then detained by ICE. If officials believe they could be granted asylum at a legal hearing, and they are deemed not to pose a flight risk or a criminal threat, they are released and sent to a sponsor family who provides for them while they wait for their asylum hearing. They are not eligible for federal government assistance.

## **Why are these people coming to the US?**

Most are fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries: Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua—sometimes known as the Northern Triangle. This is the most violent region of the world not in an active state of war. (Sources: UNHCR. Pacific Council on International Policy.)

Most asylum seekers we've met arrive as a family—usually one parent with 1-2 children. Some fled from a violent spouse. Most fled gangs that extort family-owned businesses and threaten to forcibly recruit or kill their children.

## Why is gang violence such a problem in Central America?

Like many conflicts, this one defies easy explanation. But at least one reason for the epidemic of gang violence in Central America is this: we exported it.

This crisis was fueled in part by the mass deportation of gang members from the US to Central America in the 1980s and 1990s, including those convicted of both violent and nonviolent crimes. Many who were deported had no meaningful ties to Central America. As we've seen with ISIS in Syria and Iraq, alienation and a lack of opportunity became the perfect recruiting tools to lure young people into a life of violence. (Sources: United States Institute for Peace, Pacific Council on International Policy.)

These gangs target women and girls for kidnapping and assault. They threaten to kill or forcibly recruit boys into their ranks. They extort family-owned businesses for "protection" money. Those who don't go along with their demands face a stark choice: flee or die.

## What happens when a family requests asylum at the US border?

The US government has implemented a metering system, allowing only a certain number of asylum seekers to cross the border each day. Families must wait on the Mexico side, sometimes for days or weeks, until their number is called. This effectively creates the appearance of a backlog on the border.

Once asylum seekers are allowed to cross, they are detained by ICE for processing. According to several firsthand accounts, conditions in detention centers are characterized by:

- Not enough space for an individual to lie down
- No windows
- Lights kept on at all times
- Temperatures kept in the low 60s
- Shoelaces, belts, and medicine confiscated and not returned after detention
- Those deemed not to be a threat are eventually released in El Paso to await their asylum hearing. They are released without any guidance, except for paperwork most of them cannot read. ICE has on some occasions released hundreds of asylum seekers at once. There is starting to be some coordination between ICE officials in El Paso and local organizations seeking to help those released.
- Asylum seekers are eventually placed with extended relatives living in the US or with host families—but there is often a 2-3 day gap where they have no support. That's where we are stepping in to make sure their most critical needs are met.

## Will these families be allowed to stay in the US?

That depends on the outcome of their asylum case. Hearings take place anywhere from six months to a few years after they arrive—during which time their location is strictly monitored by immigration officials.

Approval rates vary, but typically, fewer than 1 in 3 asylum requests are granted. According to local reports, the approval rate at one El Paso court processing Central American refugees is as low as 3%. (Sources: Department of Homeland Security, National Immigration Forum.)

The vast majority of asylum seekers show up for their hearing. All adults over the age of 18 are electronically monitored after being released from ICE custody. Those that don't show up for their hearing are automatically denied asylum. (Sources: Justice Department, Department of Homeland Security.)

## Why don't you help people in their home countries instead?

This is the first phase of a potentially much bigger response to the Central American refugee crisis. Because this is a new and, frankly, polarizing issue for a lot of people, we don't know how many of you will go with us to the border... or beyond.

But we are committed to ending war wherever it starts. We believe in the power of choosing to love anyway. And we know that most refugees don't want to leave home.

We're actively exploring opportunities to serve in the most affected communities in Central America—and if enough of you take this leap with us, we'll go in a heartbeat. There's plenty of uncertainty, sure. There's plenty of risk. After 10-plus years of living and serving in Iraq, we're accustomed to risk.

But we also know: you can't love from a distance.

## How do you know the people you're helping won't bring all the violence with them?

The short answer is: we don't.

But here's the question we ask every day: are we willing to put ourselves on the line—our bodies, our well being—even if it costs us our lives?

Love is risk. But not all risks are equal.

Research across the ideological divide points to the same conclusion: immigrants, legal and illegal, are less likely to commit crimes than the native-born population. In fact, the surge in immigration in the 1990s corresponded with one of the most significant drops in violent crime the US has ever seen. (Source: Cato Institute.)

There are many valid reasons for different approaches to border security and immigration policy. But admitting asylum seekers who are trying to escape violence does not lead to an increase in violence here. Can we eliminate all risk? No. Should that stop us from being the people who love anyway? We don't think so.

## Why do you call them “refugees”?

A refugee is defined by the UN as someone who is forced to leave their country because of war, violence, or persecution. Those fleeing Central America aren't just “migrants,” though many of them are desperate for the chance to provide for their families. They're refugees fleeing one of the most violent regions on the planet.

[RELATED: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REFUGEE, A MIGRANT, AND AN ASYLUM SEEKER?](#)

Their experience is similar in many ways to that of the people we serve in Syria and Iraq. Many of our Syrian refugee friends fled because otherwise their sons would be conscripted to fight in their country's civil war—much like many Central American families flee so their sons won't be forcibly recruited into violent gangs.

The UNHCR, the governing body for refugee protection and care, recognizes those fleeing Central America as refugees. So do we.

## **Why are you getting involved now? Why El Paso?**

We've spent years listening and talking to local groups serving on the border, particularly in El Paso.

El Paso, Texas, sits on the frontlines of the current crisis. It's one of the most active crossing points for asylum seekers. This isn't a new phenomenon, but the number of families arriving at the border fleeing violence and poverty has increased significantly. Once they are released from detention, they have almost nothing to support them until they reach their sponsor families.

We're coming alongside local friends who've been responding to this crisis since long before it made the news. In fact, they've been serving immigrant families here for over a decade.

They know the needs. They know how to help, but their capacity is maxed out. So we are providing support—building up these local groups, just as we do in Iraq, Syria, and beyond.

This response isn't about us. It's about coming alongside our friends who are already there, already doing amazing work—and providing what they need to continue serving families in crisis.

## **Why are you providing emergency backpacks?**

Asylum seekers are released into the US with almost nothing. Many have to wait days before they can be placed with relatives or a host family, where they will stay until their hearing.

We are stepping into the gap, to help them through their first days in the US, providing the essentials they need to be well.