

URGENT ACTION

DROP CHARGES AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

On 17 January 2018, US Border Patrol agents arrested Dr. Scott Warren, a 36-year old Human Rights Defender and humanitarian aid volunteer. The USA government is now prosecuting Dr. Warren for allegedly “harboring” two undocumented migrants by providing them with humanitarian aid in the desert town of Ajo, where he lives. He faces up to 20 years in prison, if convicted on all charges. The arrest came hours after the release of a report documenting the willful destruction by border agents of humanitarian aid supplies in the USA–Mexico border areas. His trial begins on 29 May 2019. Authorities should immediately drop all criminal charges against Dr. Warren for his vital humanitarian work.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mr. Michael Bailey
United States Attorney
District of Arizona
United States Courthouse
405 W. Congress Street, Suite 4800
Tucson, Arizona 85701
Email: Michael.bailey@usdoj.gov

Dear Mr. Bailey,

I am writing to urge you to immediately drop the charges against Dr. Scott Warren (case 4:18-cr-00223-RCC-DTF), which appear to constitute a politically motivated violation of his protected rights as a Human Rights Defender.

The volunteer activities of Dr. Warren and his associated organization No More Deaths provide vital humanitarian aid directed at upholding the right to life of migrants, and preventing further deaths of migrants and asylum seekers in the Sonoran Desert.

Human Rights Defenders in humanitarian aid groups, faith-based communities, activist groups, and communities living in towns along the border, have provided assistance to these migrants for many years.

Criminal, civil and administrative laws should not be misused to target and harass human rights defenders working for the rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, or others whose lives and other human rights are at risk of violation.

States should ensure that human rights defenders and their organizations are able to carry out their work in a safe and enabling environment, free from fear of reprisals.

Criminalizing the act of humanitarian aid and the most basic forms of human kindness, regardless of citizenship status, is an attack on human rights.

I call on you to immediately drop all the charges against Dr. Warren.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr. Scott Warren is a geography teacher, humanitarian aid volunteer and organizer in Ajo, Arizona, United States (USA). He holds a PhD in Geography and has lived in Ajo since 2013. He was arrested in Ajo, located 35 miles north of the USA-Mexico border, in a 70-mile migration corridor in the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona. No More Deaths (*No Mas Muertes* in Spanish), one of the organizations that Dr. Warren volunteers with, leaves water and other humanitarian aid in desert areas where migrants have frequently die. Arizona has the deadliest border area in the USA, accounting for 38.3 percent of the 7,242 border deaths recorded by U.S. border authorities over the last 20 years. The true number of deaths is likely higher.

Dr. Warren's arrest came hours after the release of a No More Deaths report documenting the willful destruction by border agents of humanitarian aid supplies in the USA-Mexico border areas. There was a [corresponding video](#) that went viral showing the destruction of several water jugs in the desert by Border Patrol agents.

Because of the extreme conditions in the desert, every year many migrants die in the hostile border terrain. Human Rights Defenders in humanitarian aid groups, faith-based communities, activist groups, and communities living in towns along the border, have provided assistance to these migrants for many years. Not only have USA government authorities failed to fulfil their obligations to prevent migrant deaths, they are actively discouraging Human Rights Defenders from carrying out their work through systematic harassment, intimidation, and prosecution.

Not all people crossing the border irregularly, through the desert or otherwise, are seeking asylum. Yet all migrants and asylum seekers have the same human right to life, which US authorities cannot arbitrarily violate by denying them life-saving humanitarian aid, whether directly or indirectly.

The crackdown on migrant human rights defenders at the USA-Mexico border comes within the broader context of the Trump administration's assault on the asylum system in the USA and immigration policies in general. More information about this is available in Amnesty International's 2018 report [You Don't Have Any Rights Here](#). Amnesty International has documented how people seeking safety and protection in the USA have been systematically denied their right to pursue asylum at the border. In constellation, these policies and practices carried out by the USA government appear to be deliberately executed in order to deter and punish requests for protection by people seeking asylum.

Part of this deterrence strategy has included a variety of tactics that discourage asylum seekers from pursuing access to the USA through designated ports-of-entry, putting them in a position where it is sometimes more expedient to take extremely dangerous "irregular" routes to cross into the USA. Those tactics include the ongoing system of "metering" asylum seekers – forcing them to add their names to illegal asylum waitlists with thousands of other asylum seekers, only a few of whom are called each day, if any at all. Left stranded on the Mexican side of the border, migrants and asylum seekers (especially those from vulnerable populations, such as LGBTI, elderly, unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, etc.) are often targeted and at higher risk of kidnapping, extortion, and violence at the hands of organized crime. Facing such risks of irreparable harm, many make the difficult decision to cross the border between official ports of entry, including by dangerous routes through the desert. They are often forced to rely on smugglers to guide them.

As the Trump administration continues to impose caps on the numbers of asylum seekers it will process at official Ports of Entry (border crossing points), the numbers of families crossing irregularly have particularly increased. Families are also more likely than other people crossing irregularly to be requesting asylum and international protection at the USA-Mexico border.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 June 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Dr. Scott Warren (he, him)