

*July 19th, 2019*

The Honorable Jim Risch,  
Chairman  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable Eliot Engel  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

The Honorable Bob Menendez  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable Michael McCaul,  
Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Dear Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, Chairman Engel and Ranking Member McCaul:

As members of the Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance, a network of over 50 Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist organizations advocating for the world's most vulnerable people, and other concerned faith based organizations, we are committed to saving lives and advancing the dignity of vulnerable and marginalized persons and communities across the world. We support U.S. investment in international humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance and peacebuilding programs that bolster human rights and alleviate suffering from hunger, extreme poverty, forced displacement, debilitating illness, natural disasters and violent conflict.

While representing various faith traditions, we all believe that people and nations are accountable for how we treat our brothers and sisters at home and abroad who are vulnerable and in need, especially children who represent the most vulnerable among us. In the rich history of our country the American people have responded with a hand up to millions of people suffering from poverty, hunger, disease, displacement and violence.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose the freezing or re-programming of funds from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Eliminating or redirecting poverty-focused U.S. government funded assistance to the Northern Triangle is counterproductive and will only exacerbate many of the issues in the region that result in increased migration. U.S. poverty-focused assistance programs in the Northern Triangle are crucial to meeting desperate human needs and addressing the root causes of migration such as violence, hunger, and poverty. Programs led by U.S. funded non-governmental organizations (NGO) are ongoing and multi-year commitments that span all sectors, including food security, education, economic stability, credible democratic processes, violence prevention, and labor and trade. The partnership of the U.S. government is crucial as its support is an encouraging signal to other stakeholders and investors. Faith based implementers in the region cannot rely on private donation alone to fill gaps if the U.S.

government fails to fund poverty-focused development assistance commitments. This is why abrupt aid cuts or re-programming can be so damaging to local groups with whom we partner to reduce poverty and violence as they make numerous long-term decisions, such as hiring, based on the understanding that this funding will continue according to the agreements the Administration has made, and the parameters set by Congress. Empowering the most vulnerable at home and abroad through steadfast commitments is at the heart of America's character and essential to global human security and prosperity.

We urge Congress to pass bipartisan legislation as soon as possible to prevent these cuts and protect future funding for the region. In so doing, Congress will make possible continued U.S. global leadership to save lives and build a world of peace and prosperity for all people, while addressing migration in a proactive and sustainable fashion.

Sincerely,

1. Adventist Development and Relief Agency
2. American Hindu World Service
3. American Jewish World Service
4. Auburn Seminary
5. Bethany Christian Services
6. Bread for the World
7. Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
8. Church World Service
9. Conference of Major of Superiors of Men
10. Disabled Children's Fund
11. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
12. Faiths for Safe Water
13. Food for the Hungry
14. FreedomRoad.us
15. Friends Committee on National Legislation
16. IKAR
17. Islamic Relief USA
18. Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
19. Lutheran World Relief
20. National Council of Churches
21. NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
22. Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, Church of the Brethren
23. Presbyterian Church (USA)
24. Tearfund USA
25. The Episcopal Church
26. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
27. The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society
28. Union for Reform Judaism
29. United Methodist Immigration Task Force
30. World Vision
31. Zakat

Cc: Members of the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Lindsey Graham and Ranking Member Patrick Leahy, Chairwoman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Nita Lowey and Ranking Member Hal Rogers

