News

A young brown woman stands and holds a sleeping toddler. The woman looks serious.

A migrant and her daughter wait for aid outside the offices of Catholic Charities in New York City Aug. 16, 2022, after being transported via charter bus from Texas. Catholic Charities USA responded Oct. 31, 2023, to "disturbing" recent remarks by a social media influencer threatening its staff for assisting migrants with basic humanitarian needs after they have been released into the country by federal authorities. (OSV News photo/David Delgado, Reuters)

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Catholic Charities USA, the organization dedicated to carrying out the domestic humanitarian work of the Catholic Church in the United States, responded Oct. 31 to "disturbing" recent remarks by a social media influencer threatening its staff.

The right-wing social media influencer Stew Peters said in Oct. 28 comments that Catholic Charities helps "coach illegals on how to get admitted here."

"We need troops on the border that will shoot people that are trying to invade our country," he said. "That'd be a good first step. But you know what a better second step would be? Shooting everyone involved with these fake charities."

The comments were livestreamed from Fall Freedom Fest in Vero Beach, Florida, on the social media platforms X (formerly Twitter) and Rumble. As of Oct. 31, the video appeared to be removed from Rumble, but was still accessible on X.

Kevin Brennan, a spokesperson for Catholic Charities USA, said in a statement provided to OSV News Oct. 31 that "these comments are deeply disturbing and could endanger Catholic Charities staff members and volunteers, who on a daily basis selflessly serve people in need in every corner of this country."

"Sadly, these reprehensible threats against our agencies are an extension of a disturbing trend from a small but vocal group of critics who misrepresent and malign the basic humanitarian care -- a warm meal, fresh clothing, a bed to sleep in for a night -- that some Catholic Charities agencies provide to migrants after they have been released into the country by federal authorities," he said. "As our nation continues to mourn in the wake of yet another mass shooting, we pray for all victims of gun violence and for an end to dangerous, hateful rhetoric."

Catholic Charities serves migrants in accordance with Catholic teaching. The group states on its website that "sovereign nations have the right to control their borders while affording protection to refugees and asylum seekers and respecting the human dignity and rights of undocumented migrants."

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Peters has previously used violent rhetoric on a number of other topics, including making similar comments about doctors who facilitate gender transitions and even about the celebrity couple Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce.

Peters doubled down on his comments about Catholic Charities in an Oct. 30 post on X linking to an article about them and writing, "These people are enemy combatants who are facilitating the invasion and overthrow of our country. They should be treated accordingly."

In response to an inquiry from OSV News, a spokesperson for Rumble said the platform "has strict moderation policies banning the incitement of violence, illegal content, racism, antisemitism, promoting terrorist groups (designated by the U.S. and Canadian governments), and violating copyright, as well as many other restrictions." The spokesperson did not immediately respond when asked if the video

had been removed.

Recent guests on Peters' show on Rumble include some Republican lawmakers and candidates, such as Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., who signed a letter in December targeting Catholic Charities' work with migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

A spokesperson for X did not immediately respond to a request for comment from OSV News on whether making threatening remarks on a livestream would violate its terms of service.

An apparent automatic response from X read, "Busy now, please check back later." X owner Elon Musk's layoffs at the company impacted nearly the entire communications department, according to multiple reports.