News



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks to employees at the Department of Homeland Security in Washington Jan. 28, 2025. The Department of Homeland Security said March 21 that it will revoke temporary legal protections for more than 500,000 migrants legally present in the U.S. from Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela. (OSV News/Reuters/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

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Catholic groups that minister to migrants and refugees are expressing concern over President Donald Trump's order to revoke the parole program that allows legal migrants from several Latin American and Caribbean countries to connect with sponsoring family members and work in the United States.

The Federal Register published the official order March 25 that removes temporary legal status for 532,000 migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela, or CHNV.

The document said the status of nationals from these four countries with temporary parole will be terminated 30 days after that date. From October 2022 through January 2025, CHNV migrants arrived in the U.S. with prior authorization to work and be with their sponsors.

The government's notice promulgated by Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem argued Congress intended the government's parole authority be "narrowly tailored to specific instances," not a broad set of criteria, with determinations of eligibility "made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account each alien’s unique circumstances."

"Parole is inherently temporary, and parole alone is not an underlying basis for obtaining any immigration status, nor does it constitute an admission to the United States," it added.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' spokeswoman called the termination of the program "counterproductive" to the Trump administration's stated goals of promoting respect for the rule of law and reducing strain on U.S. communities.

"We urge the Administration to consider the adverse impact of this action on citizens and noncitizens alike, especially given the ongoing conditions in several of the implicated countries," the USCCB's Chieko Noguchi said in a statement provided to OSV News.

Catholic social teaching on immigration, explained by the USCCB, balances three interrelated principles — the right of persons to migrate in order to sustain their lives and those of their families, the right of a country to regulate its borders and control immigration, and a nation's duty to regulate its borders with justice and mercy.

Noguchi noted that ending the CHNV program would lead to greater disruption of the stability of those who are contributing members of society, who work and pay taxes and raise families in the U.S. She said the bishops' conference called on the administration "to work with Congress on a meaningful reform of our nation's immigration system that would provide for well-regulated borders and humane, orderly immigration."

Randy McGrorty, executive director of Catholic Legal Services of the Archdiocese of Miami, said in his part of Florida, a significant segment of the population is from all four countries named in the crackdown.

He told OSV News the affected CHNV migrants contribute to the local economy because they work in high-demand service jobs such as hospitality, construction, caregiving and farming.

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"This group has really filled these critical positions. So that's why I say it's very important to South Florida, because this group are very often family members of U.S. citizens," McGrorty said. "They are neighbors of U.S. citizens, and they provide critical work that benefits U.S. citizens."

McGrorty said within 30 days, all of these employees will be out of work.

"It's something very concerning to the South Florida community," he said.

Apart from explaining what the Federal Register notice means and whether there is another form of relief, he said "there's very little" that can be done for them.

McGrorty said he has been in immigration legal assistance since 1993 and currently, the country is in a period that is "extremely unwelcoming."

"I always remind people that while we are a country of immigrants, the United States has never been particularly welcoming of immigrants. There has always been a reluctance of welcoming the stranger, which is very much part of our Catholic faith," he said. "Right now, there is a very concentrated effort to deport people."

"These are people who are fleeing for their lives," said an advocate whose Catholic organization in the nation's Southwest works with migrants from the four countries in the program. The migrant advocate spoke to OSV News on condition neither she nor her organization be named.

"So when I heard that these people have until April 24 to return to their countries, it's hard to imagine the situations they are returning to," she said. "And I think it will just encourage people to go deeper underground here because death and incarceration or kidnapping is almost sure once they get back."

The migrant advocate reiterated that all the families her group worked with, until the border was closed in January, entered lawfully. And they did so after escaping situations of extortion, having to pay protection money to drug cartels, being kidnapped and "really fleeing life and death situations."

The advocate also said her organization is now a resource for the CHNV migrants, referring them to consulates and human rights groups to try to get legal help and look for other means to remain legally.

Catholic Legal Immigration Network executive director Anna Gallagher said in a statement that her group, also known as CLINIC, believes the termination of the CHNV program is "a devastating blow to thousands of vulnerable people seeking safety and stability" that violates "our nation's moral and legal obligation to welcome those fleeing persecution and violence."

"Denying safe pathways for migrants contradicts these values and fails to recognize the God-given humanity of those in need," she said. "CLINIC urges the administration to reverse course and protect the most vulnerable among us."

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.