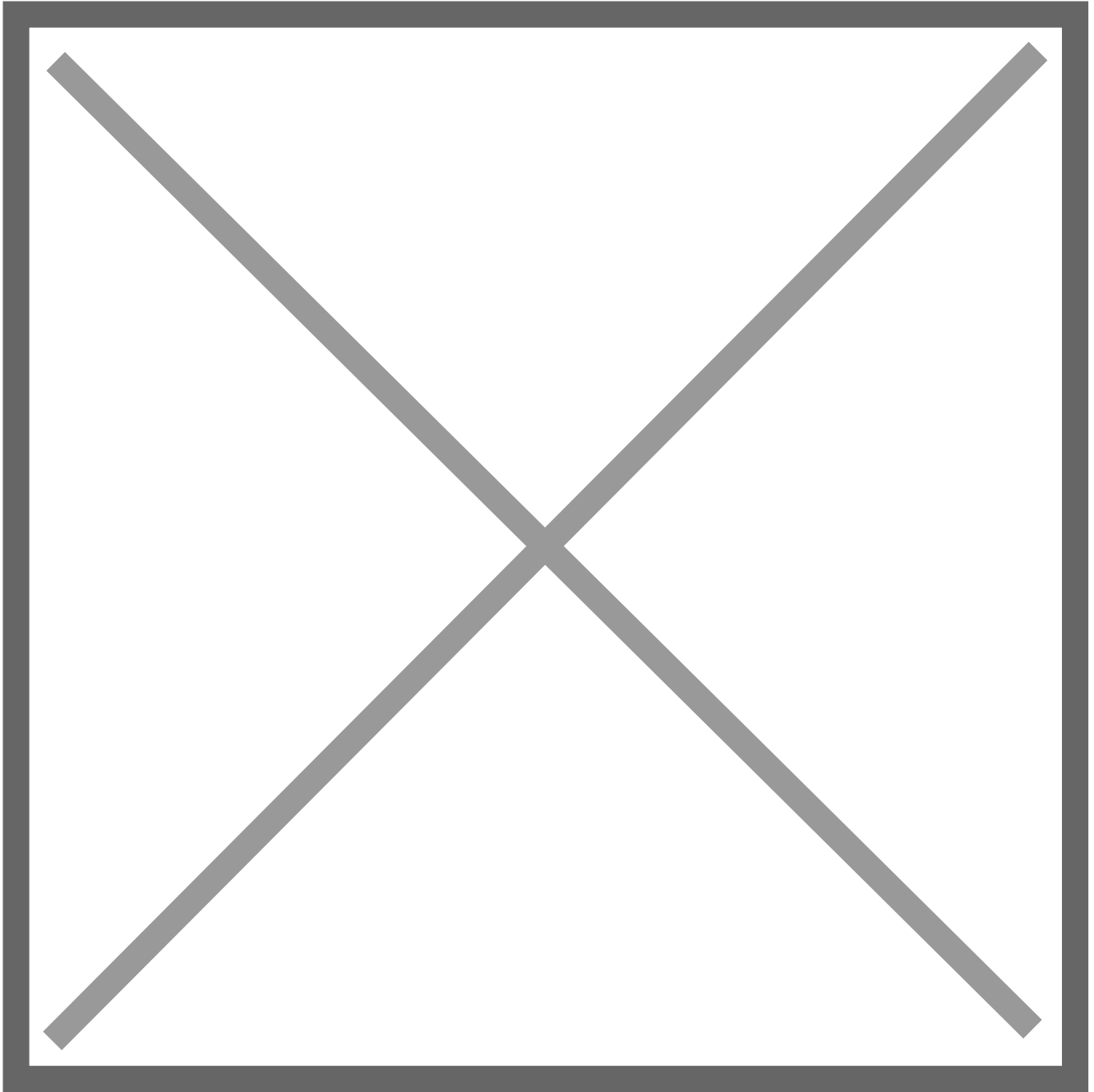


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Mexican migrants carry their belongings Jan. 15, 2026, as they walk toward Mexico across the Paso del Norte international border bridge after being deported from the United States, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. (OSV News/Reuters/Jose Luis Gonzalez)

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Catholic and evangelical leaders issued an ecumenical statement Oct. 13 as part of a joint effort to call for compassionate immigration reform.

Bishop Brendan Cahill, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, and Rev. Walter Kim, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, are the co-chairs of the Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue on Immigration. Their joint statement, "A Call for Christian Compassion and Wisdom in the Immigration Debate," marks the first such statement on immigration in U.S. history to be jointly issued by senior leaders of their respective traditions, they said.

The pair said that although they have "doctrinal differences," they are "united in our conviction that God calls us to stand both with our fellow Americans who are experiencing economic and cultural anxieties and with our immigrant neighbors who are facing existential challenges."

The statement articulated shared principles that every human being is "created with dignity, bearing God's image," and that government "is responsible for protecting its citizens and providing for the common good, including the establishment and enforcement of reasonable immigration policies."

Those policies should include targeted, humane border enforcement, clear legal pathways to citizenship and efforts to prevent the separation of families, they said.

They also highlighted risks to religious liberty presented by certain immigration enforcement efforts.

Catholic and other faith leaders have pointed to recent cases where religious liberty challenges have intersected with immigration issues, such as a recent lawsuit from the Archdiocese of St. Louis against the federal government over a policy it said prohibits priests from distributing holy Communion and hearing the confessions of people detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"We especially commit to upholding the right to religious liberty," the statement said. "This right extends to all people, of all faiths and none, no matter their immigration status. It is implicated in a particular way for those in detention, for whom we as Christians are specifically compelled by Christ to offer our pastoral care (Matthew 25:31-46). We are resolute in our commitment to working with the relevant authorities to ensure access to religious and pastoral services for all in detention, that each person may have the opportunity for spiritual counsel and active participation in the sacraments."

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Faith leaders have also raised alarm about the need to prevent immigration enforcement actions at places seen as sensitive locations, including houses of worship, schools and hospitals.

In a joint statement issued through the USCCB, Cahill — currently bishop of Victoria, Texas, but was recently appointed the next bishop of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois — and Kim said, "What is unique about this statement is not the content, which is grounded in centuries of Christian teaching and tradition that we have already affirmed separately, but the clear unity that exists between us in this moment."

"As pastors devoted to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we share a responsibility to articulate our convictions, even when it comes to subject matter as challenging as immigration. In doing so together, we seek to embrace our common heritage as both Christians and Americans," they said. They added that through Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue on Immigration, "we have found a strong sense of fraternity and common purpose. It is from this sincere and patriotic perspective, and with deep concern for those affected by current immigration

policies, that we offer this statement with both conviction and hope."

A joint report issued last year by the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and World Relief, found that more than 10 million Christians living in the U.S. would be vulnerable to deportation under Trump administration policies implemented in 2025. A majority of them were Catholic followed by a sizable number of evangelicals.

The joint statement from Cahill and Kim noted the report's findings.

"Roughly one in 12 believers in this country either faces the loss of legal status or shares a home with someone who does," they said. "Their fear is our fear; their tears are ours to wipe."

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. [View the full series](#).