



BORDERS: WALLS OR BRIDGES?

Proceedings of the First International Forum
ON
MIGRATION AND PEACE

Antigua Guatemala, January 29-30, 2009

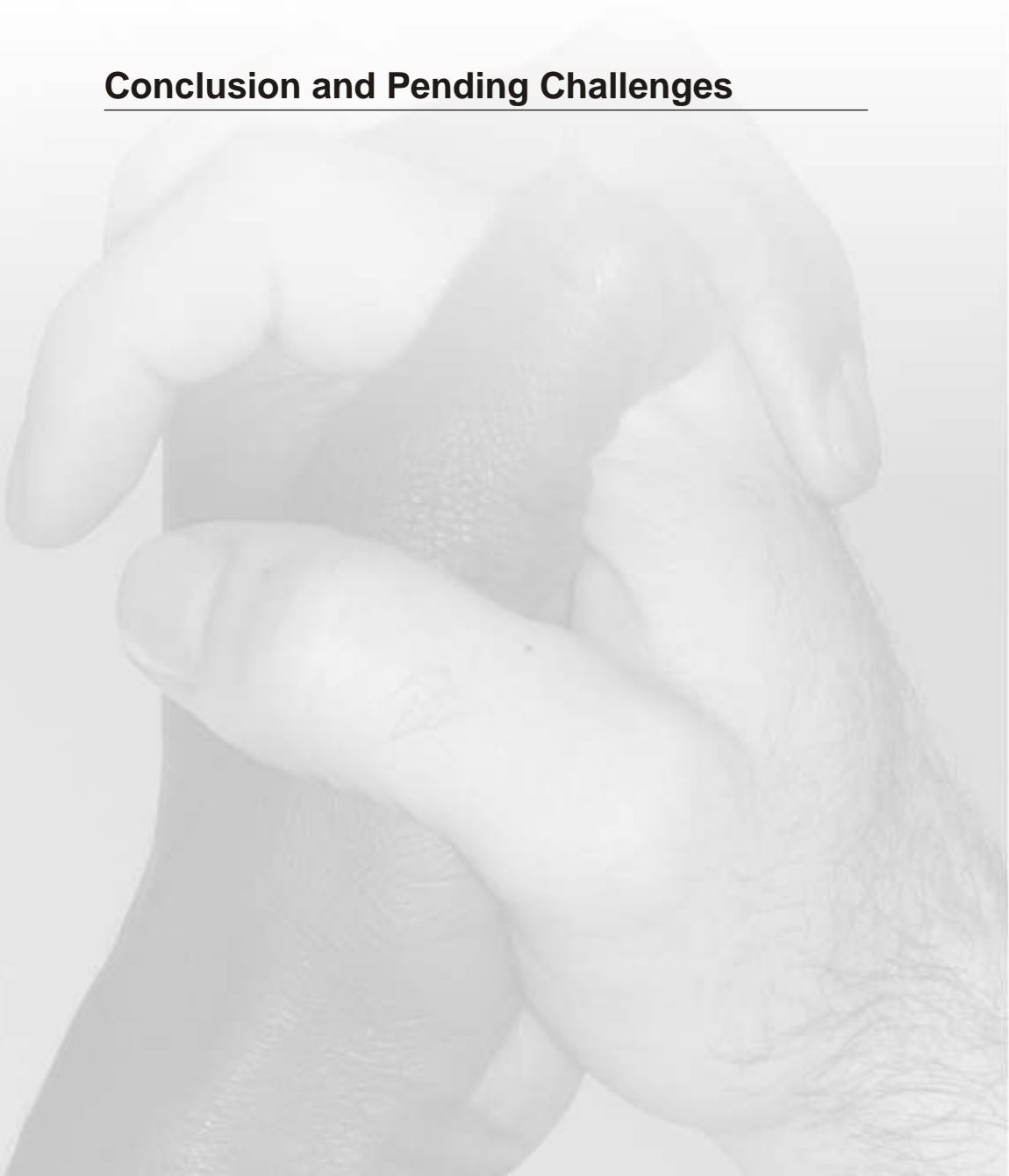
Edited by

Leonir Mario Chiarello
Maria Isabel Sanza Gutiérrez
Ezio Marchetto

Scalabrini International
Migration Network

BORDERS: WALLS OR BRIDGES?

Conclusion and Pending Challenges



Dr. Frank La Rue Lewy

*President of Instituto DEMOS and
United Nations Special Rapporteur
on Freedom of Opinion and Expression*

Good afternoon. We would like to conclude this First International Forum on Migration and Peace, first of all, by congratulating the *Scalabrini International Migration Network* (SIMN), for organizing this meaningful event, and all the foundations and institutions that supported it, as well as all the participants.

As Special Rapporteur of the United Nations for the Freedom of Opinion and Expression, I would like to offer a brief reflection about the freedom of expression in regards to immigrants. When we talk about freedom of speech, generally we think of freedom of the press or the protection of journalists, which evidently constitutes a fundamental principle of this right. However, since I became Special Rapporteur for the United Nations, I have promoted an additional facet of the views we have of this right: a focus on the freedom of speech of socially marginalized people and groups.

We, from the Special Rapporteur position, aim to promote the topic of eradicating racism and discrimination in regard to freedom of speech. It is for this reason that we have joined efforts with the current Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Speech for the Organization of American States (OAS). And in the same line we are coordinating different events from this platform: for the time being, we have thought about doing an event, probably in Bolivia, and another, regional one, in Guatemala for Central America, where there will be discussion on the topic of indigenous people and freedom of speech. Along these lines, we are working on some research on “populations in extreme poverty, access to communication, and access to information” for which we are also inviting and encouraging the participation of other sectors of the United Nations.

It is also important to mention that, during this Forum, I have already had conversations with the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on Migrant Rights, Dr. Jorge Bustamante, to join efforts in the inclusion of the topic of freedom of speech, which is an undeniable topic for

all of the world's democracies, and also for the world's migrant population. It is through these alliances that we can contribute in taking down the walls of silence and building bridges of communication and peaceful international coexistence.

There are other topics also on which my office would like to work and reinforce its activities, and they are: children, adolescents, youth, and their access to media and freedom of speech. In sum, we want to promote freedom of speech for all the marginalized sectors, for all of those who have been or are being denied this fundamental right. This denial of freedom of speech is linked to racism and discrimination, but also, to the flawed application of laws, like the criminalization of social conflicts and international migrations.

In this sense, we aim to promote a vision of international migrations from a different perspective. In all the countries of Latin America, for example, we worry about our migrants going north, towards the United States, Canada, and Europe, but we do not assign the same dimension of importance to the migrants from other countries within our region, their protection, the exercise of their rights and their freedom of expression. Migrants, because of their different languages, cultures, or ethnic and racial origin, suffer discrimination. Migrants are also criminalized for entering another country undocumented. On the other hand, migrants themselves are self-marginalizing, or they keep silent so as not to call any attention; they make themselves invisible in the countries where they arrive.

We think that, just as freedom of speech is not subject to race, color, religion, sex, or socioeconomic background, it is also not subject to the fact of moving to another country with or without documents, whether you have a visa or not, or whether the passage was legalized or not. There are, of course, administrative measures that countries or governments can apply, but they may never treat them like criminals, because that they are not.

Moreover, they cannot be denied their freedom to express their opinion or to speak. The silence of the migrants, like the silence of the oppressed people of the world, is part of the reason for the existence of impunity and for the weakness of, and lack of justice in, the legal systems.

By virtue of this, and in conclusion, I would like to call for a continued joining of forces. We have already coordinated a meeting in Geneva with Father Leonir Chiarello of SIMN, for the purpose of bringing the topic of migrants' freedom of speech to the table, so they can raise their

voices, give their opinions, and be heard, before both national and international justice systems, as well as before the international public; so they no longer have to silence themselves voluntarily or become invisible.

I deeply believe that as the voices and expressions of migrants begin to be heard, the walls of impunity will crumble, and due process of law, together with the full exercise of human rights, will effectively prevail. For this reason, I take this opportunity to invite all the organizations here present, to join forces around the different issues, and as I said before build bridges communication, as a universal right of humankind.

Thank you very much.

Rev. Alfredo Gonçalves

Provincial Superior of the Scalabrinian Missionaries, São Paulo, Brazil

Good evening. I was given the task of synthesizing the topics discussed during these days of the Forum. To do this, I would have to perform a miracle. Confronted by a forum with so many people, so rich and dense in its contents, it seems to me that I would be doing it violence in trying to synthesize it. Each one of us is going to take with him a much richer experience than what I am going to say here. What I am proposing are four “axis” that can help define the guidelines for a real commitment as bridge-builders for peaceful coexistence:

First Axis: *Faces*. During this Forum, many faces have passed before our eyes: faces of migrants, faces of pastoral agents, faces of people of science, faces of experts, faces of politicians, faces of Nobel Peace Prize Winners, faces of people who are committed and want to be committed. Our own faces are a portrayal of the Forum.

Second Axis: *Paths*. According to this Forum, what paths do migrants trace on the map? What paths do migrants trace from north to south and from east to west? Where do migrants come from? Where are they going? We could redesign the map of migrations. And we are asking ourselves: Who accompanies them? Who welcomes them? Who is working for them?

Third Axis: *Roots*. Why are people migrating? Could we gather from this Forum some of the reasons that bring people to move around the planet? At the very core of the root causes of migration we will encounter the socioeconomic situation, political upheavals, violence, wars, the ideologies of neoliberalism, capitalism, and all the “isms” we have considered during the days of this Forum.

Fourth Axis: *Answers*. What answers could the Forum provide and did provide? What answers can be found in this Forum? It is not easy, but we can detect those experiences which belong to the process of building bridges. The answers that were presented here could be synthesized in this manner: in the present world crisis, the migrant is the protagonist of peace; the migrant is not a problem; migrants are an opportunity for peace. For many governments and for many institutions migrants are a problem. For

us, the migrant is an opportunity for peace. The very fact of migrating brings into focus a denial of citizenship and the loss of homeland, but it should also bring into focus the urgent need for change. The migrant himself, then, is the answer; the migrant is a prophet, the protagonist of peace. As he moves the migrant moves history and moves the Church and should also move governments.

Thank you very much.

Rev. Sergio Geremia

General Superior of the Scalabrinian Missionaries

I just want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart: thank you, Guatemala, for opening your doors and being the site of this Forum on Migration and Peace. I thank Guatemala in the person of the president of the Episcopal Conference, Bishop Vizcaíno, in the person of Most Reverend Alvaro Ramazzini, President of the Pastoral Commission for Human Mobility.

My gratitude goes to the people of Guatemala, whose work has made this Forum possible in such competent and splendid manner. Behind the scenes, there is truly a large number of people who have offered their cooperation. I want to thank the coordinating team that has made this Forum a reality: especially Fr. Leonir and Fr. Mauro and the entire support team. Special thanks to you, Leonir.

My thanks also go to those who through their contributions have made it possible to receive inputs from all the Central and Latin American countries. I will not mention everyone by name because I would need an entire sheet.

Thanks to all those who have passed through this venue; who sat on the panels; and who addressed their words to us. The Forum has relied on the interventions of such generous persons.

Finally, thanks to all of you, because together we have been the key players of this Forum. With our extensive attendance, we have created a warm environment and have worked together so that this Forum could be a success. The reason that has brought us here is the same one that we will carry with us: the migrant, a person who needs to be welcomed and loved most of all, because we are Christians.

ORGANIZED BY:

**Scalabrini International
Migration Network**



WITH THE SUPPORT OF:



PASTORAL DE MOVILIDAD HUMANA
CEB



FONDAZIONE CASSAMARCA
Noni, spazio per il dialogo e l'aiuto

