

Paths to Migration video script (3 minutes)

Statement of Criminologists Without Borders

justiceworks@yahoo.com

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Irregular migration continues to occur globally and the reasons for this are three: escape from oppression, the human yearning for education and work, and the dream of an opportunity for a better life.

Dr. Sharon Pickering: “The human desire to move is one of the most innate we share. The question is why, and how do we enable some migration and not others. And most importantly for us criminologists, to insure we minimize the harm involved with taking unsafe and precarious migration journeys.”

These differences disproportionately victimize women, children, the elderly, and ethnic and religious minorities.

The result is people move from their homelands for same reasons that human migration has occurred throughout human history.

Dr. Gabriella Sanchez: “It would be significantly more effective to use all the resources we are dedicating to detection, prosecution, enforcement, criminalization, incarceration, into allowing people equal and dignified access to passports and visas. That would be a far better use of everybody’s resources.”

The right to have asylum claims examined on an individual basis and protection against forcible return, and pushbacks at land and sea borders, appear fundamental.

It is essential to uphold a child’s right to seek asylum or protection, or to reunite with family members.

The absence of safe & regular pathways for immigration and asylum lies at the heart of migrant smuggling.

Pickering: “As experts in the field, it is incumbent on us to call out the fictions that fuel demonization, suspicion, and hostility --- whether that be at the national or local level.”

Field research involving interactions with smugglers and migrants reveals they are quite similar in their backgrounds and motivations. There is no clear offender and victim. In fact, they largely resemble one another as victims of circumstances in which they had no part in creating. But they are powerless to effect change, so they are forced to leave their homes.

Sanchez: “It’s the lack of access to legal, and dignified, paths to migration.”

When the rule of law is not made available, and visas inaccessible, migrant smuggling is a predictable outcome.
