



# National Latina/o Psychological Association

Asociación Nacional de Psicología Latina

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The National Latinx Psychological Association (new name effective 1/1/19) denounces the unnecessary, despicable, and health-threatening use of tear gas on several hundred innocent people, including primarily women and children at the San Ysidro crossing as a new low for the Trump Administration. The unprovoked attack on individuals who posed no threat to the United States is further evidence of the degradation of moral values by our elected officials and those who have been appointed by them.

News outlets have reported that the use of tear gas by the U.S. may be a violation of the United Nations Charter. It is an egregious human rights violation to attack peaceful individuals who are currently residing in another sovereign country. Additionally, under Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” As such, it is well within the rights of these migrants to apply for asylum in the United States. It is this country that is violating the law by not allowing peaceful asylum seekers their due process.

It is also well documented that the use of tear gas can cause physical and psychological injury, disability, and even death. The harmful effects of this toxic agent are particularly devastating on children. Of note, the Chemical Weapons Convention bans tear gas as a weapon in warfare. The fact that its domestic use is permitted, despite its inherent and indiscriminate danger, and that U.S. law enforcement all too often uses it as a method of crowd control is troubling.

The thousands of individuals who are escaping the violence of their home countries are attempting to seek refuge in the United States. They are fleeing persecution on multiple levels, and as a result, carry with them a tremendous burden that manifests itself in various forms of complex trauma. As a nation, we should be making every effort to help these individuals as mandated by the law, not contributing to further trauma.

As a country, we have entered a very dark period in our history. President Trump’s fear-based perspectives shame the United States and put us at risk of escalating a humanitarian crisis, reminiscent of the U.S. turning away the *St. Louis* ocean liner carrying desperate Jewish immigrants, many of whom were subsequently murdered in the Holocaust. We are persecuting and retraumatizing those who are most vulnerable.

The National Latinx Psychological Association urges the newly elected Congress to act quickly to cease the brutality at the U.S.-Mexico border and to protect and process asylum seekers consistent with U.S. and international humanitarian laws.