

# Political Ethics and the Rights of Unaccompanied Migrant Children<sup>1</sup>



Der Beitrag argumentiert, dass der Kosmopolitismus im Gegensatz zu den politischen Modellen des politischen Realismus und des Ethnonationalismus die Anforderungen einer politischen Ethik der Migration erfüllt. Die Menschenrechte sind für unbegleitete Migrantenkinder besonders wichtig. Die UN-Konvention über die Rechte des Kindes bietet einen Rahmen für die Rechte von Migrantenkindern, der je nach den konkreten Umständen kontextualisiert werden kann. Die jüngsten Veränderungen in der Migrationspolitik der USA und der EU verletzen trotz der politischen Rhetorik von Würde und Rechten die Rechte von Migrant:innen und bergen daher die Gefahr, dass die moralische Integrität des Westens ausgehöhlt wird. Aufbauend auf früheren Untersuchungen fordert der Beitrag weitere Forschung, Aufmerksamkeit für die Erfahrungen von Migrant:innen, Bildungsmaßnahmen und interreligiöse Diskurse, um die Solidarität mit Migrant:innen und die Unterstützung ihrer Rechte zu fördern, wie es von der katholischen Kirche und der christlichen Ethik gefordert wird.




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## Introduction

Thousands and thousands of minors are “unaccompanied alien children,” as they are legally named in the US, or “unaccompanied migrant children,” as the UN defines them. In reality, unaccompanied migrant children never go it completely alone (Zamora 2022). They may have been with their parents or relatives and separated during the journey, or separated by border control agents. They may well be accompanied by other minors and adults, by supporters and shelter personnel who offer them water, meals, comfort, and some rest. Smugglers or so-called coyotes, by the drivers of trains, buses, cars, or by those who have the courage to steer a rubber boat across the Mediterranean Sea accompany them. They are virtually accompanied by the tears and good wishes of those they leave behind, sometimes their parents,

grandparents or other kin, sometimes non-related caretakers who cannot guarantee the children’s safety or well-being in their home countries. As research has shown, violence in the home countries, not the ‘pull’ factor of the destinations, is the common cause for children leaving their countries unaccompanied (Menjívar 2017).

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While crossing the border to the US or the European Union, unaccompanied migrant children are also accompanied by the surveilling border con-

trols, by helicopters over their heads, or by aircrafts and other security measures. If they cross the border between Mexico and the US, for example, they may be met by the employees of the Office of Refugee Resettlement; although they are rarely accompanied by lawyers to the hearings of their cases, they are accompanied by social workers, volunteers, and journalists. Some children reunify with parents in the receiving country and begin the emotional, cultural, and social journey into their new lives. But even when they have made it that far, they may end up in deportation procedures again after months or even years. They may be separated again when their undocumented parents are deported, sometimes after decades of living in the US. Unaccompanied migrant children are but one

<sup>1</sup>This essay is an updated and shortened version of Haker 2019.