

End Detention for Vulnerable Immigrants

JCPA urges the federal government to immediately end the detention of vulnerable immigrants, the “zero tolerance” family separation policy, and the denial of due process to those in our custody or seeking our protection. Criminally prosecuting migrants, traumatizing children and tearing apart families, and imprisoning them in inhuman conditions conflicts with the values of family unity, dignity, and justice we hold dear as both Jews and Americans.

Recent changes to U.S. immigration policy have placed tens of thousands more immigrants—including children and asylum seekers—in detention facilities and unlicensed shelters. The inhumane conditions at immigration detention centers and border holding facilities violate federal law and standards. Abuse is systemic. Eyewitnesses detail horrific conditions, such as overcrowding and denial of adequate medical care, shelter, food and clean water, and basic sanitation.

At the same time, new policies like “Remain in Mexico” and “metering” bar vulnerable populations from entering the U.S. to seek asylum at Ports of Entry, a legal right enshrined in both U.S. and international law. Wait times are up to a year. Kidnapping, rape, and murder of those who remain in Mexico is common, forcing many to chance the perilous journey of crossing between Ports of Entry. Most are fleeing unspeakable violence, trafficking, and coercion in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, countries with the world’s highest murder rates.

- **Urge the Administration to end the “zero tolerance” family separation policy, which remains in force, and immediately reunify all separated families.** The Administration can end “zero tolerance” at any time, without legislation. Separating children inflicts irreparable psychological trauma on both parents and children, many of whom are already traumatized.
- **Congress should end the detention of asylum seekers, families, and children—with or without their parents.** Jailing asylum seekers, children, and other vulnerable immigrants is inhumane and cruel. Abuse in immigration detention is systemic and has been for years according to the Department of Homeland Security. There are credible reports of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children and adults in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody. In addition, detaining a family costs between \$300-\$800 per day, draining funding and resources that could be used to address the humanitarian crisis or pursue real national security threats.
- **Reject proposals to remove protections for vulnerable children provided by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and the Flores Settlement Agreement.** Allowing unaccompanied children to be deported more quickly risks returning them to the very violence and exploitation they fled. Undermining the Flores agreement would wrongfully expand family and child detention in jail-like conditions. The Administration is pushing Congress to overturn the health and welfare standards that protect children from long-term detention so that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can jail families indefinitely, despite widespread opposition from medical professionals and ongoing reports of abuse.
- **Reallocate funding from detention to community-based alternatives to detention (ATDs) like case management and legal orientation programs, which are more humane**

and cost-effective. Under the Family Case Management Program, a pilot program ended in 2017, families were provided resources to help them navigate the asylum application process and court proceedings. The program had a 99.6% appearance rate at court hearings and a 75% appearance rate for deportations, at a cost of just \$36 per day per family. We urge for the casework be operated by a nonprofit.

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