

## Separation of Families at the U.S./Mexico Border: A Timeline in Progress

- July 12, 2019: Vice President Mike Pence visited an overcrowded, unsanitary detention center in McAllen, Texas. He acknowledged that conditions were “tough” but said that he “was not surprised by what I saw. I knew we’d see a system that was overwhelmed.” He did not acknowledge that the system was overwhelmed as a result of the Trump administration’s own policies of detaining asylum seekers en masse, but instead, blamed Congress for not giving the Executive branch more funding. Any glance at the astronomical levels of funding allocated to CPB and ICE, however, would raise questions about such a claim.
- July 12, 2019: “Lights for Liberty: A Vigil To End Human Detention Camps” events and vigils were held in hundreds of cities across the United States.
- July 10, 2019: A House committee (the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties) held hearings into the treatment of migrant children at detention facilities. Titled “Kids in Cages: Inhumane Treatment at the Border,” it included testimony from Yazmin Juárez, 21, a Guatemalan migrant whose 21-month old daughter Mariee, died weeks after they were released from a family detention center in Dilley, Texas. Others shared similar testimony of abuse, deliberate cruelty, and neglect. Four Democratic and four Republican members of Congress also testified, offering strongly opposing viewpoints about whether detention center conditions were unacceptable, where the blame lay, and what should be done. Staff for the committee prepared a report, Child Separation by the Trump Administration, July 2019 (<https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2019-07-2019.%20Immigrant%20Child%20Separations-%20Staff%20Report.pdf>). Two further hearings are scheduled: with the Inspector General of DHS and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, as well as members of Congress who recently visited detention facilities (7/12); and with Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan (7/18).
- July 10, 2019: Media reported that CPB agents at a facility in Yuma, AZ, are facing allegations of sexual assault, as well as of retaliation for protests over poor food and water, unsanitary conditions, and overcrowding abuse, mistreatment, and of detained migrant children. Nearly 30 accounts from Health and Human Service case managers between April 10 and June 12 document these concerns.
- July 4, 2019: Media reported that since December, the government has been issuing fines that total as much as half a million dollars to migrants who have been ordered deported but who have not left. ICE officials say they have the authority to impose fines up to \$799 a day.
- July 3: President Donald Trump tweeted that if migrants are unhappy with the conditions of their detention, they should not come. His response is consistent with a policy based on belief that deplorable conditions, combined with

criminalization—rather than addressing causes of migration—will prevent migration. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, he claimed that facilities are “beautifully run” and again blamed Democrats for any difficulties.

- July 2: The government’s Office of the Inspector General published a report titled “Management Alert—DHS Needs to Address Dangerous Overcrowding and Prolonged Detention of Children and Adults in the Rio Grande Valley.” [https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-07/OIG-19-51-Jul19\\_.pdf](https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-07/OIG-19-51-Jul19_.pdf). The report describes severe overcrowding including standing room only in some detention facilities creating desperation among migrants, and children without hot meals and showers.
- July 1: Media revealed the existence of a secret FaceBook group of Border Patrol agents who made violent, racist, sexist, dehumanizing and xenophobic comments about migrants and members of Congress. Members also expressed indifference to migrant deaths. Representative Joaquin Castro (D-TX) said that the report “confirms some of the worst criticisms of Customs and Border Protection.” Border Patrol Chief Carla Provost publicly condemned the group, called “I’m 10-15,” stating “These posts are completely inappropriate and contrary to the honor and integrity I see — and expect — from our agents day in and day out. Any employees found to have violated our standards of conduct will be held accountable.” It was later revealed that Provost had participated in the group.
- June 29, 2019: A federal judge ordered a mediator to act swiftly to address conditions in border patrol facilities in TX where observers had reported children living in filthy conditions without adequate food.
- June 26, 2019: Newly released documents show that the government continues to separate children from parents and guardians, despite the Trump Administration’s claim that it ended its family separation policy. Between the supposed end of family separations in June 2018 and March 2019, almost 400 more children were forcibly separated. The government generally cites a parent’s supposed criminal history or gang affiliation as justification, based on flimsy evidence and often inaccurate data.
- June 25, 2019: Between October 1, 2018 and June 2019, Border Patrol agents have rescued at least 315 migrants, including toddlers and children, from a 209 mile stretch of the Rio Grande in the Del Rio Sector.
- June 25, 2019: President Trump falsely claimed that conditions in detention facilities were better than under President Obama.
- June 23, 2019: A woman and three children were found dead on the banks of the Rio Grande on the McAllen, TX side.

- June 23, 2019: Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez, 25, and his 23 month-old daughter Angie, drowned in the Rio Grande when trying to cross to the U.S. A photograph that showed them face down in the water, with Angie tucked inside her father's shirt, circulated widely in Mexico and the United States. As a result of the Trump administration's "Remain in Mexico" policy, they had been waiting in Matamoros, Mexico, to present their asylum claims to U.S. officials, but decided to enter the U.S. rather than continue waiting.
- June 21, 2019: Media reported on extremely unsafe and unsanitary conditions at a Border Patrol facility in Clint, TX, where hundreds of children were being held. Children as young as 7 were caring for toddlers they had just met; few had clean clothes, access to soap and water, or adequate food; and some were sleeping on concrete. Clint is not the only facility with these kind of conditions. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 249 children were transferred out of the Clint facility; on June 25<sup>th</sup>, all but 100 children were returned to Clint.
- June 18, 2019: Department of Justice lawyer Sarah B Fabian appeared before the court in the 9<sup>th</sup> circuit in San Francisco, representing the Trump administration in a case concerning how the federal government is legally obligated to treat detained migrant children. She sought to dispute that sanitary conditions or sleeping conditions were required. Fabian's arguments do not make her exceptional but rather, reflect the culture of ICE, CPB, and the Trump administration.
- June 4, 2019: Reports surfaced of the death of another migrant child in US detention. 10-year old Darlyn Valle from El Salvador died in September 2018 but reports of her death are only now being made public. At least six migrant children are known to have died in US detention in the last eight months: Darlyn Valle (September 2018); Jakelin Caal Maquin (December 8, 2018); Felipe Alonzo Gomez (December 24, 2018); Juan de Leon Gutierrez (April 30, 2019); Carlos Gregorio Hernández Vásquez (May 20, 2019); and a two-year-old Guatemalan boy whose name has not been released (May 14, 2019). Four of the six children were from Guatemala; two of them (Jakelin and Felipe) were from Mayan communities.
- June 3, 2019: The government's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released its final report, "Concerns about ICE Detainee Care and Treatment at Four Detention Centers" (<https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-06/OIG-19-47-Jun19.pdf>). The report followed up on the findings from unannounced visits to 4 detention centers between May and November 2018. ICE states that it has satisfactorily addressed each issue. The major issues OIG identified were:
  - immediate risks or egregious violations of detention standards at facilities in Adelanto, CA, and Essex County, NJ, including nooses in detainee cells, overly restrictive segregation, inadequate medical care, unreported security incidents, and significant food safety issues.... All four facilities had issues with expired food, which puts detainees at risk for food-borne

illnesses. At three facilities, we found that segregation practices violated standards and infringed on detainee rights. Two facilities failed to provide recreation outside detainee housing units. Bathrooms in two facilities' detainee housing units were dilapidated and moldy. At one facility, detainees were not provided appropriate clothing and hygiene items to ensure they could properly care for themselves. Lastly, one facility allowed only non-contact visits, despite being able to accommodate in-person visitation. Our observations confirmed concerns identified in detainee grievances, which indicated unsafe and unhealthy conditions to varying degrees at all of the facilities we visited

- First week of June, 2019: Mexico, under pressure from the U.S., implements tougher measures to prevent Central Americans from arriving at the Mexico/US border including by breaking up caravans, setting up roadblocks along common routes north, and increasing detention and deportations. In return, Trump dropped his threat to impose steadily increasing tariffs on goods from Mexico.
- May 30, 2019: The Inspector General warned of dangerous overcrowding among adult migrants housed in El Paso Texas, with up to 900 people held in a facility designed for 125. In some cases, cells designed for 35 people were holding 155 (<https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-05/OIG-19-46-May19.pdf>).
- May 28, 2019: *Rewire* reported that pregnant migrants are not receiving adequate care; are sometimes shackled while giving birth; and some women in the Western District of Texas are forced to hand over their infants at birth to the Texas Department of Families and Protective Services. Reuniting with their newborns hinges on getting released from detention and getting legal help to navigate the child welfare system.
- May 21, 2019: The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists released a report, *Solitary Voices* (<https://www.icij.org/investigations/solitary-voices/thousands-of-immigrants-suffer-in-us-solitary-confinement/>) showing that of 8,400 cases reviewed, ICE used solitary confinement as punishment for very minor infractions; and that vulnerable migrants including those who identified as transgender, suffered from mental illnesses, or were suicidal were routinely placed in solitary, often for prolonged period. Among those placed in solitary was a mother protesting forcible separation from her child.
- May 5, 2019: The Trump administration has explored numerous ways to reduce possibilities for claiming asylum, some of which have been blocked by the courts. Newly released training documents show how the US plans to further its restrictionist agenda by making it more difficult for asylum seekers to pass initial screenings.
- May 4, 2019: Documents obtained through FOIA requests show (1) as we know, DHS sought to portray family separation as a means to combat human smuggling

and trafficking; (2) specific initiatives through which DHS advanced this agenda; and (3) DHS's primary concern with advancing anti-immigrant policies by targeting families.

- May 1, 2019: DHS announced it would start a pilot program of DNA testing (Rapid DNA) in 2 border locations, to run for 2-3 days, to establish the veracity of claims to family ties among adults and children crossing the border. The use of DNA testing by immigration officials is not new; this particular pilot is just one more of the many surveillance measures that are continually justified by claims of protecting children from smugglers, even as the government continues to detain children under conditions that have generated global, national, and local outrage.
- April 30, 2019: Although the right to seek asylum is enshrined in law, the Trump administration announced plans to charge fees for seeking asylum. They also plan further changes designed to speed up processing and rejection of asylum claims, and to bar work authorization for some asylum seekers.
- April 29, 2019: Newly released FOIA documents show that the administration tracked those who protested migrant family separations. A private cybersecurity company, Looking Glass, which was contracted by DHS, compiled a list of more than 600 protests, which was widely shared including with controversial national security "fusion centers" (<https://www.dhs.gov/state-and-major-urban-area-fusion-centers>) across the country. These revelations echo other information showing government surveillance programs that target social activists, journalists, and immigrant rights defenders.
- April 8, 2019: At least three sources told NBC News that President Trump wants to officially reinstate a policy of family separations at the border because he remains convinced it will deter migration.
- April 1, 2019: Donald Trump threatened to close the US/Mexico border (or large portions of it) if Mexico does not do more to halt unauthorized migration including by those seeking asylum.
- March 28, 2019: Media report that DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielson will ask Congress for permission to deport unaccompanied migrant children and detain families seeking asylum longer than is permitted by law.
- March 15, 2019: The Rachel Maddow Show on MSNBC showed copies of spreadsheets kept by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, headed by anti-abortion crusader Scott Lloyd, that tracked detained migrant girls' menstrual cycles and pregnancies. The goal was to prevent them from accessing abortions.
- March 1, 2019: Members of Congress called for an investigation after reports of a sharp increase in the number of miscarriages among pregnant women in immigration detention.

- February 28, 2019: Three advocacy groups sent a letter to DHS's Inspector General and Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties expressing concern that at least 9 infants younger than 1 year old (including 1 infant that is 5 months old) are detained in the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley without adequate care.
- February 22, 2019: Media report that Democrats are preparing to subpoena the Trump administration for documents related to its family separation policy.
- February 19, 2019: Newly released documents show what the Department of Health and Human Services received more than 4,500 complaints about the sexual abuse and assault of unaccompanied minors who were detained in government custody between 2014-2018. In the same time period, the Department of Justice received a further 1,303 complaints. Sexual abuse and assault remain significantly underreported, which means that these complaints do not reflect the scale and severity of the problem.
- February 12, 2019: Staff at Annunciation House in Texas report that the Trump administration is still separating children from parents when they cross the border together. Officials sometimes use uncorroborated claims of crime as justification.
- January 2019: There has been an outcry over the arbitrary and opaque process by which case workers vet sponsors and discharge (or not) detained migrant children from custody to the sponsors.
- January 25, 2019: The Mexican government publicly disagreed with the Trump administration's policy of forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while the U.S. considers their applications.
- January 25, 2019: Senator Jeff Merkley released an internal DHS memo dated December 2017 that proposed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Office of Refugee Resettlement and ICE. The MOU was formalized in April 2018. The memo anticipated that arresting children's sponsors would deter those who paid a smuggler to bring their child to the United States.
- January 25, 2019: The Southern Poverty Law Center filed a class action lawsuit that accuses the Office of Refugee Resettlement of working with immigration officials to facilitate immigration enforcement against sponsors of migrant children.
- January 17, 2019: A report by the Office of the Inspector General reveals that the Trump administration separated thousands more children from parents or guardians than had been thought, but the total remains unknown. See <https://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-BL-18-00511.pdf>.

- January 11, 2019: The administration announced that the controversial Tornillo detention center in TX, which held over 2,800 of migrant children in tents, despite warnings of serious health and safety issues, will close. However, the administration now plans to increase bed space in another tent city for juveniles in Homestead, Florida.
- December 2018: A lawsuit filed by the ACLU sought information about the nature and extent of abuse of detained migrant children. A follow-up suit sought the names of the Customs and Border Protection officers who allegedly abused the children. See <https://cbpabusestest2.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/exhibit-a.pdf>
- December 24, 2018: 8 year-old Felipe Gómez Alonzo from Guatemala died while in CPB custody with his father.
- December 20, 2018: The Supreme Court rejected Trump administration policy to deny asylum to any migrant who crosses the southern border illegally. On Nov 9, Trump issued a proclamation that only asylum claims made at an official port of entry would be considered. Lower courts blocked the policy from going into effect; on December 20, 2018, the Supreme Court upheld the lower courts' ruling.
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46652863>
- December 20, 2018: The Trump administration announced that the United States would begin requiring people seeking asylum at the southwest border to wait in Mexico for a court ruling on their cases. Mexico has (reluctantly) agreed. The change is effective immediately (and another clear signal to discourage migration)
- [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/us/politics/mexico-trump-asylum-seekers-migrants.html?emc=edit\\_th\\_181221&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=174524041221](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/us/politics/mexico-trump-asylum-seekers-migrants.html?emc=edit_th_181221&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=174524041221)
- December 19, 2018: Judge Emmet Sullivan of the DC District Court ordered the Trump administration to stop using a June ruling from then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions when determining when domestic and gang violence victims who entered the US without papers would be eligible to stay and apply for asylum. The ruling forces the administration to consider persecution by non-state actors as a valid basis for claiming asylum.
- <https://www.vox.com/2018/12/19/18148610/immigration-asylum-domestic-gang-violence-trump>
- December 18, 2018: In a major policy reversal, the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees the care of migrant children, said that it would no longer require that all members of a household where a child is to live be fingerprinted. Instead, fingerprints will be required only of the adult who is sponsoring the minor, typically a parent or another relative.

- December 8, 2018: 7 year-old Jakelin Caal Maquin from Guatemala died while in CPB custody. See <https://www.thenation.com/article/guatemala-refugee-crisis-jakelin-caal-maquin/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/world/americas/migrant-jakelin-guatemala-border.html>
- November 2018: Despite the official ending of family separation at the border, media reports that Border Patrol is using a legal loophole to continue separating families at the border. <https://www.propublica.org/article/border-patrol-families-still-being-separated-at-border-after-zero-tolerance-immigration-policy-reversed>.
- November 2018: Yazmin Juárez sues the U.S. government after her child, who was detained by ICE, dies.
- November 8, 2018: The Trump administration announced new rules restricting people's ability to apply for asylum, and expanding the mandatory detention of all asylum seekers including children. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/11/08/trump-unveils-hard-line-immigration-policy-that-limits-asylum.html>.
- October 2018: media reported that the Trump administration was planning a new family separation strategy. Under the plan, asylum seeking families would be detained together for up to 20 days. After that, parents would be given a "choice" (called the "binary choice" plan) between being detained with the children through the course of the parents' immigration proceedings (which could potentially take years) or sending their children to an ORR "shelter" where they could supposedly be released to a sponsor (if the person stepping forward to sponsor is not arrested) <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/10/12/trump-administration-family-separations-return-846971> ; <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/09/06/trump-immigration-detain-families-together-770834> ; <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R45297.pdf>
- October 11, 2018: A report by Amnesty International found that US policies caused separation to many more families than previously disclosed. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/10/usa-treatment-of-asylum-seekers-southern-border/>
- September 27, 2018: A report from the Office of the Inspector General found that DHS was not adequately prepared to implement Zero-Tolerance; struggled to identify, track, and reunify separated parents and children; and provided inconsistent information to migrant parents. <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2018-10/OIG-18-84-Sep18.pdf>.

- September 2018: Numbers of detained children swelled, including because they continued arriving and those stepping forward to sponsor them often risked criminalization and deportation  
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/14/politics/immigrant-children-kept-detention/index.html>
- September 2018: In September, data showed that those who stepped forward to sponsor children found themselves investigated and, in many cases, detained and deported. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/20/politics/ice-arrested-immigrants-sponsor-children/index.html>
- A complaint filed against the government by the American Immigration Council and the American Immigration Lawyers Association shows that people were so traumatized by having their children taken, and not knowing if they'd ever see them again, that they were unable to meaningfully participate in credible fear interviews, which is the first step to establishing an asylum claim.  
[https://americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/general\\_litigation/the\\_use\\_of\\_coercion\\_by\\_u.s.\\_department\\_of\\_homeland\\_security\\_officials\\_against\\_parents\\_who\\_were\\_forcibly\\_separated\\_from\\_their\\_children\\_public\\_fin\\_o.pdf](https://americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/general_litigation/the_use_of_coercion_by_u.s._department_of_homeland_security_officials_against_parents_who_were_forcibly_separated_from_their_children_public_fin_o.pdf) In September 12, 2018, a settlement was reached that allowed some 1,000 people affected by these policies to reopen their asylum cases:  
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/09/13/us-reaches-agreement-over-separated-immigrant-families.html>
- Data shows that parents and kids traveling together, rather than adults without kids, were deliberately targeted under the zero tolerance policy.  
<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/07/new-data-shows-how-trump-administration-prosecuted-migrant-parents-with-children-instead-of-adults-traveling-alone/>; <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/520/>
- It became evident that (1) several hundreds of records that might have linked parents and children had been destroyed by CPB; (2) many existing records were very incomplete (e.g. listing a deported parent's address just as "Guatemala City"); (3) many parents had already been deported; (4) parents were coerced into signing away their rights to have their asylum cases heard, and to agree to deportation, in exchange for being reconnected with their children (which often didn't happen after they signed).  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/02/us/politics/immigration-family-separation-dhs.html> <https://psmag.com/news/a-new-report-reveals-how-family-separation-led-border-officials-to-break-the-law>
- For reunification to occur, parents or sponsors had to undergo a security screening and DNA testing. Anyone else living in the household had to undergo screening, with the results turned over to DHS. The government tried to insist the ACLU was responsible for reunifying parents and children; the Judge said no.

- June 26, 2018: A Federal Judge ordered the Trump administration to reunify children with parents. <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/26/judge-orders-trump-reunite-migrant-families-678809> and <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/26/politics/federal-court-order-family-separations/index.html>
- June 20: after national and global protests, President Trump announced he was ending family separation (but seeking new ways to lock up parents and kids)
- June 11, 2018: Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a ruling making it virtually impossible to be considered for asylum based on domestic abuse or threats of gang violence. <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1070866/download>.
- May, 2018, US announced it would end TPS for as many as 57,000 Hondurans who held Temporary Protected Status in the United States, giving them until January 2020 to leave or find a route to regularize their status. The likely impact on their US citizen children was not acknowledged. <https://www.vox.com/2018/5/4/17320352/tps-honduras-cancel-trump-temporary-protected-status>
- President Trump repeatedly and falsely claimed that “bad laws” made by Democrats required him to separate families and that he was powerless to stop family separations.
- Children would be placed in the “care” of (actually, incarcerated by) Health and Human Services. No provisions were made for kids and parents to remain in contact. Anyone who was caught would be referred the Department of Justice for criminal prosecution. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristjen Nielson insisted that parents who apply for asylum at recognized ports of entry (rather than crossing the border at other points) would not be separated from their children, but this was another half-truth. <https://moratoriumondeportations.org>; <https://www.naisa.org/about/documents-archive/previous-council-statements/>
- April 2018, zero tolerance went nation-wide. Any adult caught crossing the border without authorization would be referred for federal prosecution. Adults with children would be separated from the children and risked prosecution not only for unauthorized entry but also, potentially, child smuggling, including smuggling their own children. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/watch-sessions-says-zero-tolerance-policy-may-split-families-at-border>
- In February 2018, the ACLU sued the Trump administration for separating a Congolese woman from her 7 year old daughter for more than 3 months; other parent/child separations were revealed. <https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/deportation-and-due-process/mother-and-child-fled-congo-only-be-cruelly>

- In January, 2018, the United States ended Temporary Protected Status for some 200,000 Salvadorans living in their United States, giving them until September 2019 to either depart or find a route to legal status. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/08/us/salvadorans-tps-end.html>.
- In December, 2017, the American Immigration Council and others sued the Trump administration for forcibly separating children from parents at the border (Complaint against Cameron Quinn and John Kelly, December 11, 2017, concerning The Separation of Family Members Apprehended by or Found Inadmissible while in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) Custody at the U.S.-Mexico Border [https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/general\\_litigation/family\\_separation\\_complaint.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/general_litigation/family_separation_complaint.pdf)).
- In November, 2017, the Trump administration announced it would cancel the Central American Minors Program that allowed children fleeing violence in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras to apply for refugee status before leaving their countries. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/central-american-minors\\_us\\_5ae1f199e4b055fd7fc9608a](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/central-american-minors_us_5ae1f199e4b055fd7fc9608a)
- July-October 2017, the Trump administration ran a pilot “zero tolerance” program in El Paso (prosecuting all migrants who crossed without authorization including when seeking asylum).
- March 2017: John Kelly announced plans to separate parents from children, and to charge adults crossing the border with children with smuggling of the children (including their own children). After an outcry, he said there would be no separations (but there were); and adults did risk smuggling charges.
- The administration did not acknowledge that parents are generally trying to save their children’s lives by bringing them; that the United States has a significant role in creating conditions that necessitate flight; and that restrictive US immigration and asylum policies are why many parents have to bring their children clandestinely
- Under Trump, expanded deterrence measures included reduced or complete denial of opportunities to apply for asylum; more expedited removal; continued detention; and repeated claims that the migrants are unlawful criminals and security threats. In this context, new guidelines called for parents and guardians of unaccompanied children caught at the border to be prosecuted. Technically, parents would be prosecuted for smuggling, but many media outlets reported that they would be charged with trafficking or smuggling. [The Trump administration claimed to be “protecting” children, yet these policies foster trafficking; combined with the lack of routes to legal admission, it forces people into making dangerous journeys

- The Obama administration’s response primarily focused on “deterrence” and criminalization, including through family detention
- Since 2014, tens of thousands of parents and children from Central America—mainly Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—have journeyed to the United States to seek asylum. People have the right to seek asylum.