

'Truly Terrible': As Many as 463 Parents Have Already Been Deported, Putting Family Reunification in Jeopardy

Immigrant rights advocates say parents were deported under false pretense that they could be reunited with children

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As the Trump administration's court-ordered deadline approaches for reuniting all the families it has forcibly separated at the U.S.-Mexico border, Department of Justice (DOJ) lawyers [advised](#) a U.S. District Court that as many as 463 parents may have already been deported, jeopardizing reunification with their children.

The news comes weeks after reports that many parents had been asked to sign away their rights to asylum by completing so-called "[voluntary departure orders](#)" with the understanding that they could be reunited with their children if they agreed to deportation.

BREAKING: Trump admin releases new numbers on family reunifications. They still say more than 900 parents are "ineligible" to get their children back. For the first time, they disclose that more than 400 have been deported without their kids. pic.twitter.com/1faKDZQbtE

— Alice Ollstein (@AliceOllstein) [July 23, 2018](#)

Trump snatched these children away from their parents and then deported the parents... The horror of this story is only growing...

"Trump administration says 463 parents of migrant children may have been deported" <https://t.co/ProO6jff3t> pic.twitter.com/mWxJulhLes

— Andrew Stroehlein (@astroehlein) [July 24, 2018](#)

This is a long fight ahead. This is truly terrible. <https://t.co/4MQ0tRcuo2>

— Alida Garcia (@leedsgarcia) [July 24, 2018](#)

Last month, U.S. **District Judge Dana Sabraw** [ordered](#) the Trump administration to reunite 2,551 children—ranging in age from five to 17—with their parents and guardians by this Thursday, July 26.

According to the DOJ’s court filing, parents who are not currently in the U.S. may not be eligible for reunification with their children.

The ACLU and other immigrant rights advocates have argued that many of the parents who have been deported were pressured to agree to deportation without understanding their rights, following the traumatizing ordeal of family separation—many after fleeing violence and unrest in their home countries.

“If this number turns out to be as large as the report suggests, this is going to be a big issue for us,” **Stephen Kang**, an ACLU attorney representing parents in the case, [told](#) the Washington Post. “We have a lot of questions. We have concerns about misinformation given to these parents about their rights to fight deportation without their children.”

Last week, Sabraw [temporarily halted deportations](#) after the ACLU filed a report saying it needed time to contact and advise parents before they agreed to be deported—but the DOJ’s court filing suggests that it was already too late for hundreds of parents.

About 900 parents had deportation orders as of Monday, and the ACLU is [seeking](#) a court order that would halt the deportation of parents until after they have been reunited with their children—to avoid worsening the crisis described in the DOJ’s filing.

“It’s crucial that the decisions they make about the future of their children’s asylum claims are informed and non-coerced,” [wrote](#) **Amrit Cheng** on the ACLU’s “Speak Freely” blog on Monday. “It cannot be made until parents not only have had the time to fully discuss the ramifications with their children, but also to seek legal advice.”

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