

US Holding Nearly 13,000 Migrant Children in Detention Centers

A recently published report shows the number of detained migrant children is much greater than the nearly 3,000 reported by the Trump administration.

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A recently published report shows the number of detained migrant children is almost five times greater than the nearly 3,000 previously reported by the Donald Trump administration.

According to a New York Times report, 12,800 migrant children are currently being detained by the United States' government.

In the report, the NY Times claims the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) attributes the increase to a reduction in the number of children being allowed to live with relatives or sponsors while their court cases progress, and not to a similar increase in the number of children entering the U.S.

A direct consequence of Trump's zero-tolerance policy towards illegal immigration,

“Red tape and fear brought on by stricter immigration enforcement have discouraged relatives and family friends from coming forward to sponsor children,” the NY Times reported.

Earlier this year authorities announced that potential sponsors, including family members, would have to submit fingerprints during the required vetting process and that their data would be shared with immigration authorities. Most potential sponsors are undocumented immigrants themselves, so this policy acts as a deterrent.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has warned of the negative effects of child detention.

“Detention cannot be justified based solely on the fact that the child is unaccompanied or separated, or on the basis of his or her migration or residence status. ...This is particularly critical as recent studies have indicated that detention of children can undermine their psychological and physical well-being and compromise their cognitive development. Furthermore, children held in detention are at risk of suffering depression and anxiety, and frequently exhibit symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder,” it argued in a

2017 paper.

The danger to children is significantly increased by the strain on the immigration detention center system, which is making it harder for authorities to guarantee minors safety and proper treatment.

In recent months, interviews with detained migrant children have revealed they are being kept in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. Migrant children have experienced alleged mistreatment, sexual abuse, negligence, and sleep deprivation. [Reunited families](#) have also said minors were returned traumatized, withdrawn, and scared.

Despite social uproar and condemnation, on Tuesday the Trump administration announced it will triple the size of a temporary detention center in Tornillo, Texas, to house up to 3,800. According to an exclusive CBS News investigation, Tornillo and Homestead, another large temporary detention center, are exempt from “surprise” child welfare inspections designed to guarantee the health and safety of children kept at these centers.

The Trump administration also announced reforms last week to allow indefinite detention by keeping parents and children together in custody. Analysts argue that the reform will open a new judicial battle because it would violate the 1997 Flores settlement, which stipulates children can only be kept in immigrant detention for up to 20 days.

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