

# Trump executive order: Indefinite detention of immigrant families, 2,300 children to remain separated from parents

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On Wednesday afternoon, President Donald Trump signed an executive order paving the way for the detention of immigrant families along the US-Mexico border. The order is in response to overwhelming outrage in the population to the forced separation of thousands of children from their parents.

But last night, Trump administration officials made clear that the order was not retroactive, meaning that more than 2,300 children who have been torn away from their parents since early May would remain separated. Trump was explicit that his order does not limit the ongoing “zero tolerance” policy whereby parents are being criminally prosecuted for illegally crossing the border—an act that was criminalized by Democrats and Republicans alike.

Trump’s order also allows for family detention only “where appropriate and consistent with law and available resources,” and provides for separation if there is “a risk to the child’s welfare,” leaving wide-open loopholes for the continuation of the criminal and inhumane practice of tearing children away from their parents and placing them in separate detention camps.

Furthermore, it is possible that the order will be overturned within three weeks because a federal judge may rule that the order violates the 1997 court settlement reached in the lawsuit *Flores v. Reno*. In *Flores*, the Clinton administration reached a consent agreement with plaintiffs mandating that children be released from detention “without unnecessary delay.”

Trump’s order requires indefinite detention for children and their parents. If the federal judge overseeing the ongoing *Flores* case rules against Trump, then the policy of child separation will likely be reimplemented, giving Trump an excuse to blame

judges for the separation policy.

The order is an effort to tamp down popular outrage which peaked this week following the release of images of youth being packed into cages and audio of young detainees crying out for their mothers and fathers as ICE agents ridiculed their suffering.

In a meeting with White House executives and congressmen before releasing the executive order, Trump said, “We have to be very strong on the border, but at the same time we want to be very compassionate.”

“We all want to keep families together,” Trump proclaimed. “At the same time, we have to be strong on the border, otherwise you’ll have millions of people coming up. Not thousands like we have now, you’ll have millions of people flowing up and just overtaking the country. And we’re not letting that happen.”

Since Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the zero-tolerance policy in April, over 2,300 children have been taken from their parents at the border. Babies, toddlers, children and teens have been placed into internment camps where they are subjected to the terrible loss of their parents, along with physical and emotional abuse by guards.

In the “tender age” shelters that have been erected across southern Texas, young children mostly under five years old are being psychologically damaged.

“Normally toddlers are rambunctious and running around. We had one child just screaming and crying, and the others were really silent,” Colleen Kraft, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, told CNN after visiting the shelters. She stated firmly that child detention centers are “nothing less than government sanctioned child abuse.”

Democrats claim to oppose the separation of families at the border, but this is nothing more than damage control aimed at blocking the possibility of mass demonstrations. Denouncing the cruel detainment of children at the border as “unconscionable”, the Democratic Party and sections of the Republican Party seek to hide their active role in the building of immigrant internment camps and a fascistic police force that has detained thousands of children and their families.

There are countless ways to point out the hypocrisy of the Democratic Party’s sudden concern over immigrant workers. Between 2014 and 2016, President Barack Obama oversaw the arrest and detention of 127,000 immigrant families. Many of the camps where children have been held in the Trump era were constructed by the Obama administration.

Photos of immigrant children sleeping in cages that circulated online earlier this year actually featured scenes from a child detention center in Arizona in 2014. Additionally, an American Civil Liberties Union report last month detailed widespread physical, sexual and mental abuse of child detainees by Customs and Border Protection under Obama’s watch.

In this way, the slogan “Families Belong Together,” which the Democrats have promoted in social media posts and demonstrations in front of detention centers and the White House, has exposed the bankruptcy of their official position that families belong together—not free from fear of deportation, but when they are arrested, abused and sent back to the violence and poverty they attempted to flee.

A legislative proposal put forward by California Democrat Dianne Feinstein is fundamentally identical to Trump’s executive order, calling to keep families together while working toward a bipartisan solution for increasing border security.

The political establishment does not have one drop of genuine concern over protecting immigrants from brutalization. Under Trump’s latest order the American Gestapo—ICE and CBP—will continue to detain families across the country and detain children and teenagers who cross the border without their parents. They will continue to rip immigrant parents from their workplaces and their homes while their families and friends watch in horror.

As the political establishment lurches to the far-right,

wide layers of workers and youth oppose the assault on immigrants across the country. In Portland and Los Angeles, 24/7 camp-out blockade protests have been organized this week in front of ICE facilities where immigrants are temporarily detained in the deportation process. The demonstrations have attracted dozens to thousands at any given moment and have temporarily halted the activities of ICE and CBP in those facilities.

Rallies and demonstrations have drawn thousands demanding the reunification of families in cities and towns across the US with a nationwide day of protests set for June 30.

The popular demand to defend all immigrants in the United States will not find expression in the Democratic Party. All of those who wish to defend the basic democratic rights of immigrant workers and fight against the inhuman violence waged by immigration police must break with the Democrats and fight the capitalist system that gives rise to the need for tens of millions to flee their homes ridden by imperialist war and poverty. Only the independent mobilization of the working class, uniting workers across national and ethnic lines, can put an end to the abuse of immigrant workers and their children.



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