

Only 57 of 3,000 immigrant children have been reunited with parents

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The Trump administration has blatantly ignored a court order requiring it to reunify children under the age of five who were separated from their parents at the US-Mexico border. Out of 103 of the youngest children, only 57 children were reunited with their parents while the remaining 46 were deemed “ineligible” for alleged “safety” reasons or because their parents were already deported or in criminal custody. That means that roughly 2,950 of the 3,000 children separated from their families have not been reunited with their parents.

Last month, US District Judge Dana Sabraw established a series of deadlines for the Trump administration to reunite the nearly 3,000 children separated from their parents, mostly under the administration’s “zero tolerance” policy. The first group of children was required to be reunited with their parents by Tuesday.

The government falsely claims that it is in full compliance with Sabraw’s order. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Homeland Security (DHS), Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and Health and Human Services Secretary (HHS) Alex Azar said in a joint statement that their departments “worked tirelessly” to safely reunite children, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) has been negotiating with Sabraw to carve out exceptions.

The media has effectively abandoned the issue, deeming it resolved. The media has instead focused on bogus allegations of “Russian intervention” in the US elections. But in reality, hundreds of parents will never see their children again as a result of Trump’s policy.

Half of the children under the age of five who were not returned to their parents were not returned because the parents are in criminal custody in the United States or have been sent back to their home countries. Twelve parents have already been deported and have found it

impossible to locate their children. The US government claims that it is working with foreign consulates in an effort to return children to the deported adults, officials said.

Although the Trump Administration has claimed that it has stopped large-scale separations of families at the border, some parents claim that they were separated from their children after the supposed halting of the family separation policy. Even if the family separation policy were actually halted, the change would only mean a return to the status quo previously set by the Obama administration under which families were detained together in immigration jail.

In reality, families crossing the border will still face the possibility of being separated and children will continue to be used as a deterrent. In their joint statement, the DOJ, DHS, and HHS confirmed this:

“Our message has been clear all along: Do not risk your own life or the life of your child by attempting to enter the United States illegally,” the statement said. “Apply lawfully and wait your turn.”

The government has also implemented tougher rules for migrants seeking asylum in the United States. Earlier this week, officials at the US border were provided with a new set of guidelines that will likely lead to more asylum seekers being turned away before they have had a chance to prove their “credible fear” of returning to their home country before an immigration judge.

On Wednesday, US Citizenship and Immigration Services issued a memo that indicates asylum seekers fleeing domestic or gang violence should generally be denied entry into the United States, and also notes that officers may use an illegal border crossing against a migrant in his or her asylum case.

Under US law, migrants who demonstrate they have a

“credible fear” of persecution in their home country can be granted asylum within the United States. Migrants that cross the US-Mexico border, illegally or through legal ports of entry without valid visas, are placed into detention and typically given a “credible fear” interview after a few days.

However, the new memo all but reverses such rules. Some reports from the border have even shown that migrants trying to enter legally are being turned away.

The new guidelines largely mimic a decision made by US Attorney General Jeff Sessions last month. Sessions reversed long-standing US policy by ruling that most victims of gang or domestic violence alone are not eligible for asylum under federal law.

Ignoring the fact that the US is largely responsible for destabilizing countries in Central America, Session wrote, “the mere fact that a country may have problems effectively policing certain crimes or that certain populations are more likely to be victims of crime, cannot itself establish an asylum claim.”

Sessions’ decision and the new memo have already drawn criticism from immigration lawyers.

Laura Lynch, a senior policy lawyer with the American Immigration Lawyers Association, told the *Texas Tribune* that migrants wouldn’t have any opportunity “to obtain a lawyer or provide evidence to corroborate their claims” under the new policies. “This memo...is effectively shutting off access to asylum in the US,” she said.



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