

Reports document sexual abuse of immigrant children detained in US

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Newly released US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) documents reveal that there were 4,556 complaints of sexual harassment of detained immigrant children from October 2014 to July 2018.

The documents highlight the criminality of American imperialism, which has torn thousands of children from the arms of their working class families after destroying their Central American home countries through decades of war, dictatorship and corporate exploitation.

Individual reports of abuse dating from both the Obama and Trump administrations paint a picture of the nightmare endured by many of the children in detention. Referring to the victims with the dehumanizing term “UAC,” for “unaccompanied alien child,” one report from the Shiloh Treatment Center in Texas reads:

UAC reported he was abused by the same staff member twice... In the first instance, UAC said the staff grabbed his hand and pulled it towards his midsection while sitting. UAC pulled away, but staff member squeezed his hand and held it over his crotch for about 40 seconds. Staff then slapped the back of the UAC’s head. A few days later while UAC was sleeping, the staff member squeezed the UAC’s crotch area over his clothing. The staff threatened UAC not to say anything.

The report notes that the matter was investigated but “no findings were made” and that the staff member remained employed.

Other reports tell similar stories.

“Minor said a staff member grabbed him in the crotch area and squeezed after he had been physically restrained,” says one write-up from Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center in Virginia. The report concludes: “The

incident was not investigated.”

A child at Southwest Key Campbell in Phoenix, Arizona, said staff “entered her bedroom and touched her while she was sleeping,” and that “law enforcement interviewed staff but only took a report and did not investigate.”

Other examples of abuse include actions by older detainees against younger detainees as a result of indifference and negligence by government-contracted staff.

At the end of 2018, there were roughly 15,000 children in detention at any given time. A report published by the *World Socialist Web Site* in November 2018 exposed the brutal treatment and harsh punishment of detained immigrant children.

The latest exposure of widespread sexual abuse of detained immigrant children has passed with little comment in the corporate media. At press time, neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post* had published an opinion article on the subject since the story broke Tuesday afternoon.

While the media has largely relegated this issue to the back pages, the major news outlets have instead focused attention on the “humanitarian” case for intensifying diplomatic and military pressure on Venezuela and on the latest #MeToo allegations against various public figures.

The HHS documents expose the hypocritical character of the claims by the Trump administration and Democratic Party politicians that the US-led coup operation against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is justified by the cruelty of the government and the need to restore “democracy.” Statements by figures like Bernie Sanders backing the “democratic” pretexts of Washington’s efforts to install a puppet government in Venezuela are lies coming from a government that is engaged in the systematic persecution and abuse of defenseless children separated from their families for the

“crime” of migrating.

If the US received reports that a government in its crosshairs (such as Syria, Russia, China or Venezuela) had jailed 15,000 children and was covering up sexual abuse by guards and staff, all of the television talking heads and *New York Times* columnists would exhaust themselves crying crocodile tears, expressing their outrage and lecturing about the “moral imperative” to bomb the country to smithereens.

Prominent leaders of the right-wing #MeToo campaign have responded to the HHS documents, as they have to previous reports of sexual abuse of detained immigrant children, with silence.

In recent weeks, the corporate media and the Democratic Party have promoted a series of high-profile sex abuse allegations, including against singer/songwriter Ryan Adams, Virginia Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax and animator John Lasseter. In each of these cases, #MeToo proponents have called for the resignation or firing and social ruination of these public figures on the basis of uncorroborated allegations. Lasseter, for example, is accused of giving “unsolicited hugs.”

In total contrast, the HHS documents show real sexual abuse on a large scale over several years carried out by the US government. Often the abuse is caught on camera. Those either committing or permitting the abuse are adult jailers operating as government contractors, in many cases with state-sanctioned impunity.

Among those who to date have not so much as issued a tweet about the HHS report are: Tarana Burke, founder of the #MeToo campaign; Rose McGowan and Asia Argento, who accused Harvey Weinstein of assaulting them; *New York Times* writers Joe Coscarelli and Melena Ryzik, who reported bogus allegations against Ryan Adams; Mandy Moore, Adams’s ex-wife, who alleged that he “abused” her by not granting her enough time in the recording studio; Democratic presidential candidate and #MeToo champion Kirsten Gillibrand; *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, who last week called Woody Allen a “monster;” and the *New Yorker*’s Ronan Farrow, who broke the initial accusations about Weinstein in 2017.

For all their sanctimonious statements of concern about “survivors” and “victims,” these affluent careerists are uninterested in the systematic sexual abuse of immigrants for the simple reason that there is no money to be made and no way to advance their careers on the suffering of these children.

At its root, the #MeToo campaign is a right-wing

initiative to reallocate wealth and positions of privilege to women within the top 10 percent of the population. Those promoting it advance the anti-democratic argument that the presumption of innocence and due process must be done away with and accusers “must be believed.”

This campaign against due process is wholly consistent with and helps to fuel Trump’s fascistic attack on immigrants. In 2018, Trump explicitly called for the abolition of due process for immigrants, tweeting: “When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no Judges or Court Cases, bring them back from where they came. Our system is a mockery to good immigration policy and Law and Order.”

If the term “immigration” is exchanged for “sexual assault,” Trump’s tweet becomes indistinguishable from the line of the #MeToo campaign.

Trump and his neo-Nazi advisor Stephen Miller allege that immigrants are “rapists” and “criminals.” They have used these racist slanders to detain hundreds of thousands of people, rounding them up at schools, churches, work places and courthouses.

The broader anti-democratic implications of this pogrom against immigrants are already being seen in Trump’s claim of quasi-dictatorial powers via his national emergency declaration and his fascistic attacks on socialism. By undercutting popular support for due process, the #MeToo campaign is paving the way for further attacks on the democratic rights of the working class and oppressed.

Building a movement against the fascistic attacks of the Trump administration requires opposing all calls for the abolition of democratic rights and due process. Such a movement will be based not on self-interested social climbers in the top 10 percent, but on the international working class through the revolutionary fight for social equality.



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