

# Biden administration detaining thousands of migrant youth in appalling Border Patrol cells

Kevin Reed  
9 March 2021

The Biden administration's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is detaining the largest number of unaccompanied migrant children in the agency's history, and 1,400 of them are being held beyond the three-day legal limit.

CBS News reported that it had obtained government documents showing more than 3,200 migrant children were being held in appalling jail-like cells at Border Patrol stations, and at least 170 of these youth are under the age of thirteen.

Under US immigration law, CBP is obligated to transfer children to shelters operated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of the Department of Health and Human Services within 72 hours of taking them into custody.

However, an unprecedented number of unaccompanied children arriving at the US-Mexico border has overwhelmed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) infrastructure and led to a massive backlog of minors being held in facilities that were set up for the purpose of detaining adult men. The number of minors being apprehended at the border is currently estimated at three times greater than what it was just a few weeks ago.

CBS News noted the facilities the youth are being detained in have been described as “dog kennels” and “ice boxes” by migrants. Children are also being held in a “soft-sided” detention center in southern Texas which is designed for short-term detention.

The *New York Times* reported that “people familiar with the agency's latest data” said there were nearly 100,000 migrants apprehended at the border in the month of February and an additional 19,000 “adults and children” had been detained by border agents since March 1.

According to the *Times*, the surge of workers and

children arriving in the US is a result of a combination of people fleeing poverty and violence in Central America, the devastation caused by the recent hurricane season and an expectation that the Biden administration would reverse the Trump administration's war against immigrants.

The crisis is exacerbated by measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in which the ORR reduced its bed capacity from 13,000 to 8,000 last year. However, on Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) authorized the department to return bed space back to pre-pandemic levels, citing “extraordinary circumstances,” according to a government memo obtained by CBS News.

The CDC memo said, “The only available options for housing (unaccompanied children) are prolonged stays at CBP facilities operating significantly above COVID-adjusted capacities, or placement in ORR facilities operating at capacity above the current COVID-19-adjusted thresholds.” The memo said further, “While CDC recognizes the inherent risk posed by any congregate housing facility, CBP facilities are not appropriate for housing children.”

During the month of February, ORR shelters—including the reopened Carrizo Springs, Texas and the Homestead, Florida facilities that were opened during the Trump administration for holding children separated from their families—received more than 7,000 migrant children.

The previous one-month record for detained minors was 5,900, set in February 2019. There are currently 8,100 unaccompanied children being held in these detention facilities.

While the Democratic Party Biden-Harris campaign promised a “quick and dramatic reversal” of the Trump administration's criminal treatment of immigrants and

to put in place a “fair and humane” immigration policy on “day one,” the latest developments expose these statements as having been completely false.

In an interview with MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” program on Tuesday, Biden White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the horrendous treatment of migrant youth was an “incredibly difficult and quite an emotional issue for many of us in the White House.” She attempted to deflect responsibility for the crisis by blaming it on procedural problems carrying over from the Trump administration.

Psaki said, “The challenge is there are a lot of really difficult choices. We are trying to chart the best path forward. But there’s no question, this is a heartbreaking circumstance at the border.” In a press conference later in the day, Psaki refused to refer to the situation at the border as “a crisis,” saying, “I don’t think we need to put new labels on what we have already conveyed as challenging and a top priority for the administration.”

The Biden administration clearly identified the situation facing unaccompanied migrant youth as a crisis last weekend when the new Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, domestic policy advisor Susan Rice and a dozen other senior administration officials were dispatched to the border over the weekend.

The group “traveled to the Southwest border to visit a Department of Homeland Security Border Patrol facility and a Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement facility,” according to a White House statement.

Although the specific locations were not mentioned in the press release, the one paragraph statement blamed the situation on the “guttled border infrastructure and immigration system” and said the group “discussed ways to ensure the fair and humane treatment of immigrant children and families, the safety of the workforce, and the wellbeing of communities nearby in the face of a global pandemic.”

Among the only concrete proposals to come from the White House to address the crisis was that advanced by Secretary Mayorkas calling for federal employees to volunteer to help the US government at the border. As reported by Fox News, Mayorkas wrote in an email to DHS staff, “Today, I activated the Volunteer Force to support Customs and Border Protection (CBP) as they face a surge in migration along the Southwest Border.”

Mayorkas added, “You have likely seen the news about the overwhelming numbers of migrants seeking access to this country along the Southwest Border. President Biden and I are committed to ensuring our Nation has a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system while continuing to balance all of the other critical DHS missions.”

It is clear from these developments that the Democrats have done nothing to prepare for the inevitable and substantial increase in workers and their families seeking to enter the US following Biden’s electoral victory last November.

Aside from the Democrats promoting the immigration “overhaul” bill announced on February 21—legislation which was advanced for the purpose of bargaining with Republicans in Congress—and dispensing with xenophobic rhetoric, immigration policies are developing along the same cruel and inhumane path set by the Trump administration.



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