



Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

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**Media Contact:** Lily Folkerts, [lfolkerts@lawg.org](mailto:lfolkerts@lawg.org)

***Leading Advocacy Organizations & Members of Congress Rally to Deliver More than 300,000 Petition Signatures to DHS to Stop Family Separation & Detention***

**Washington D.C.**—Ahead of Father’s Day, the Latin America Working Group (LAWG), Al Otro Lado, Alianza Americas, Amnesty International USA, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), MomsRising, National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC), CREDO, MoveOn and Church World Service (CWS) were joined by Senator Jeff Merkley, Congressman Joaquin Castro and Congressman Jim McGovern to deliver more than 300,000 petition signatures from individuals across the United States to Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen urging DHS to abandon the cruel, costly, and unjustified practice of separating families seeking protection at our borders.

“The inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty reads, ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,’” said **Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)**. “But now, this administration is replacing that message with a new one: If you are persecuted abroad and you wash up on the shores of the United States, we will treat you as a criminal, lock you up, and rip away your children. Lady Liberty’s lamp has been replaced with a pair of handcuffs. This is a stain on our nation, and President Trump and Jeff Sessions need to listen to the outcry from Americans across the country and end this cruel and immoral policy.”

“The Trump Administration’s recent actions of separating immigrant children from their parents is an inhumane tactic that deters and punishes those seeking asylum in the United States. We must continue to speak out against this injustice, which is why I was pleased to join yesterday’s press conference with the Latin America Working Group, other advocates and members of Congress,” said **Congressman Joaquin Castro (D-TX)**. “It seems we’ve lost our moral compass. It’s critical we put politics aside to get back on track with the principles of human rights and democracy as our founding fathers originally envisioned.”

““It is unconscionable to me that the United States is literally tearing families apart. There is no law that requires children be separated from their parents; this is a policy of choice, not law. In fact U.S. and international law specifically protects those who arrive at our border seeking asylum – yet the President continues to ignore the law, needlessly traumatizing countless children and families,” said **Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA)**. “This is not who we are. The majority of people in America do not support this, and we will not tolerate such acts of inhumanity from our government.”

“Over 300,000 individuals have spoken up to say no more to this cruelty. We call on the Administration to halt family separation and detention now. Many of the families being separated are from Central America, where [violence, corruption and impunity](#) have forced them to flee and seek safety at our borders. Instead of turning them away tearing children from their parents’ arms, we should be welcoming them and giving them access to protection,” said **Daniella Burgi-Palomino, Senior Associate for the Latin America Working Group (LAWG)**.



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“The Trump administration must stop separating asylum-seeking parents from their children and denying them access to protection through prolonged detention. This malicious policy is a brazen violation of human rights. People who are running for their lives have the right to seek protection,” said **Marselha Goncalves Margerin, Advocacy Director for the Americas at Amnesty International USA.**

“Today, we present the voices of opposition of more than 300,000 people across the country who are standing up against the cruel practice of separating children and families at our border. We should be working to keep families together and facilitating their access to a fair and just asylum system, especially those who have already endured so much trauma and stress, instead of inflicting more harm by tearing them apart. Communities across the country are standing up for these families and demanding that the Trump administration end this unconscionable policy immediately.” **Senior Policy Advisor Katharina Obser of the Migrant Rights and Justice Program at the Women’s Refugee Commission.**

“In just 3 weeks, it has been reported that approximately 1,000 children have been separated from their parents at the border. We don't know when this policy is going to end and how many more children are going to be rendered unaccompanied by our own government. How do you represent a baby in immigration court whose parent has been forcibly taken away from them? I think what we are seeing today with all of these signatures and speakers is that taking children from their parents is a non-partisan issue. Americans all across the political spectrum are saying ‘this is not an American thing to do. This is not a human thing to do.’” **Said KIND’s Director of Policy Jen Podkul.**

“One of the greatest opportunities that we are given on this Earth as parents is to show our children how much God loves them. These fathers who brought their children to our borders have made the ultimate sacrifice for them. They left everything they knew to give their children a chance at the American dream. Yet, our government has made its policy to separate fathers and mothers from their children. These fathers sacrificed the little they have to seek protection and safety for their children. We urge Secretary Nielsen to stop separating families. It is not who we are as a country and it is not what communities of faith want from their government,” **states Javier Cuebas, Advocacy Director, LIRS.**

**Petitions being delivered include [LAWG/MoveOn](#), [KIND/Change.org](#), [CREDO](#), [Amnesty International](#), and Women’s Refugee Commission.**

**[NGO Letter](#) accompanying petition delivery to Sec. Nielsen.**

**For a recorded video of the event, click [here](#).**

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