

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/13/brazil-should-press-trump-reunite-families>

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The [Brazilian](#) Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that 55 Brazilian children are among the thousands of immigrant detainees being held in US shelters and detention centers. US immigration agents separated the children from their parents as the families tried to enter the United States.

At first, as they wrested children from their parents' arms, some agents neglected to write down the children's names, their country of origin, or the name of the place to which they were sending each child. In doing so, they compounded cruelty with carelessness.

By now, the authorities know where the children are. What they don't know necessarily, because they haven't kept track properly, is which children are related to which adults. Some of the children are very young, and apparently some of the parents have been deported and the US government doesn't know where they are.

President Michel Temer addressed this tragedy with US Vice President Michael Pence when the two met in Brasilia on June 27. President Temer offered to collaborate on arranging transportation to Brazil for detained children whose families want them returned home. For his part, Vice President Pence simply stood by the Trump administration's zero tolerance policy. About the separated children, he had little to say.

While the US has stopped separating newly arriving children from their parents, it is now planning to detain entire families together, even though international law makes clear that detention is never in the best interest of a child.

Brazil's diplomats should ask for access to all shelters and detention centers holding children and try to map the location of every Brazilian child. They should require from the US information about where their parents are detained. They should reach out to parents and relatives to advise them on legal options for family reunification. For those families who want to be reunited in Brazil, President Temer could follow through on his offer to provide an official airplane to bring the children home.

Brazilian authorities should not only act quickly to protect the rights and interests of Brazilian children. They should also insist that the US put an end to a policy that inflicts incalculable psychological damage on innocent children, no matter their nationality.

President Trump has shown no concern about how the cruel treatment of immigrant children is viewed abroad. Still, if there is one country that might be able to press his administration to reunite these children with their families, it might well be Brazil, the largest economy of the Latin American countries from which these families are migrating.

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