

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Rights

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/2020/statement-leading-childrens-organizations-call-for-immediate-release-of-children-together-with-their-families/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 11, 2020) Childrens Defense Fund, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Save the Children, Save the Children Action Network (SCAN), and the Young Center for Immigrant Childrens Rights denounce U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcements (ICE) failure to comply with orders to release children from detention centers.

On July 7, KIND, SCAN, UNICEF USA, and the Young Center for Immigrant Childrens Rights sent a letter to ICE Acting Director Matthew Albence requesting that ICE release all children together with their families. This was in response to the June 26 court order to release children being held in family detention centers due to COVID-19 risks. Instead of releasing detainees, the administration sought an extension and continued holding children and families.

The leaders of Childrens Defense Fund, KIND, Save the Children, SCAN and the Young Center for Immigrant Childrens Rights had the following reactions:

ICE has the authority to release the families in its custody today, yet the agency continues to traumatize children and parents by keeping them in detention and threatening family separation. With every passing day, they are also unnecessarily at risk of further exposure to COVID. This cannot go on, said **Mary Miller Flowers of the Young Center for Immigrant Childrens Rights**.

Detaining a child even for one day is unacceptable. Now, holding children far beyond the legal deadline for release amid a global pandemic is dangerous and, simply put, reprehensible, said **Mark Shriver, Senior Vice President of U.S. Programs and Advocacy at Save the Children and President of SCAN**. We implore ICE to release parents from detention together with their children immediately.

Family unity is the foundational principle of child welfare law and is woven into the moral fabric of our society. Families belong together. This is not supposed to be a controversial concept, and yet the Trump Administration continues to advance dangerous and cruel family detention and family separation policies, said **Stefanie Sprow, Director of Child Welfare Policy at the Childrens Defense Fund**. ICE cannot sit idle as children learn their first words and take their first steps in prison. We urge ICE to release children together with their parents and we demand they do so now.

This isnt complicated. Theres one, and only one, humane course of action release these detained families together. Instead, the Trump administration is once again going down a cruel and inhumane path and endangering the lives of migrant children and their families in the process, said **KIND President Wendy Young**. The depravity of forcing parents to make a heart-rending decision the hardest a parent can make, when other, viable alternatives are available is breathtaking, knowing the irreparable harm and suffering family separation causes. Releasing families together and placing them into alternatives to detention, which have been proven to be successful, is the only real choice a humane society can make.

Childrens Defense Fund, KIND, Save the Children, SCAN, and the Young Center for Immigrant Childrens Rights will continue to closely monitor this situation, advocating on behalf of vulnerable children and advocating for lasting and bipartisan policy solutions to ensure each and every child is protected from harm.

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