

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/20/us-child-detention-tent-city-image-illustrates-crisis>

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Detention Harms Children, Even If Held with Family

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(New York) A [satellite image taken of the desert tent city](#) for children the [US](#) government is taking from their families shows the humanitarian crisis manufactured by the Trump administrations zero-tolerance immigration policy, Human Rights Watch said today.

The image from June 19, 2018, shows the Department of Health and Human Services tent city in Tornillo, Texas which was built on June 10 initially with 360 beds but with room for expansion. [Republican Representative Will Hurd, who recently visited the site](#), said the facility can hold up to 4,000 beds. The image is sufficiently detailed to show 28 tents erected to date, each approximately 50 square meters. Media reports indicate each tent holds about 20 children, prompting Human Rights Watch to estimate the facility has capacity for 540 children right now.

This image brings home the reality that the US government is harming hundreds of children, by ripping them apart from their parents and shipping them off to a remote desert site, said [Alison Parker](#), US managing director at Human Rights Watch. These children need their parents and appropriate care, not to be sent off to sit in tents in the desert.

According to media reports, about 2,300 children have been forcibly taken from their parents since the zero-tolerance policy began in April. That number grows every day. The children are first detained by US Customs and Border Protection in difficult conditions, as [documented](#) by Human Rights Watch. The government then separates the children from their families when it takes their parents away to face criminal charges for crossing the border illegally.

CBP then re-designates the children as unaccompanied and turns them over to the Department of Health and Human Services for placement in Tornillo or other facilities run by the agency for immigrant children.

The government is creating unaccompanied children and is now erecting this tent city to send them off to, Parker said. The Trump administration needs to end zero-tolerance but it should also refrain from re-starting family detention, which is also harmful to children.

The humanitarian issues presented by the zero-tolerance crisis include immediate [psychological harm](#) to children who are separated from their parents and detained. Children require screening and attention to their particular needs. For a child, being held captive this way can [lead to lasting harm](#).

While separation from their parents and detention raises serious human rights and humanitarian concerns, detaining children with family members is also very damaging to children, Human Rights Watch said.

Human Rights Watch urged the following immediate steps to respond to the crisis.

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