

FEDS THREATEN TO BOOT BOY

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Body

The **feds threatened** yesterday to revoke Elian Gonzalez's permission to remain in this country on Thursday unless his Miami relatives agree to surrender the **boy** if they lose their court fight to keep him here.

Immigration officials also summoned the **boy**'s Florida guardians to a meeting this morning to discuss how to carry out an orderly return of the **boy** to his father in Cuba.

The **federal** government got tough after lawyers fighting to keep the 6-year-old refugee in the U.S. balked at the **federal** government's demand that they promise to surrender Elian if they lose a court appeal.

"Without a specific written commitment ... we have no choice but to move forward with the termination of Elian's parole as of Thursday, March 30, 2000, at 9 a.m.," the Immigration and Naturalization Service said in a letter to the attorneys representing the relatives.

Even before the letter was delivered, Cuban exiles formed a human chain outside the modest white stucco house and hung a 15-foot banner with a drawing of Elian and a message: "I just want to live in freedom."

"There are a lot of people who aren't willing to kill, but are willing to die only for the child's rights," said Raul Sanchez, head of the anti-Castro Democracy Movement.

The Florida family filed an appeal to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta challenging a **federal** judge's ruling that Elian be returned to his father.

"He will be harmed permanently if he leaves this country," said Linda Osberg-Braun, a lawyer for the Miami relatives.

Elian has been embroiled in an international custody dispute since he was rescued by fishermen off the Florida Straits on Thanksgiving.

His mother drowned when their escape boat capsized in heavy seas, and his father in Cuba wants him returned. But his relatives in Miami say Elian's dad is a pawn of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro and that the **boy**'s mom wanted him to grow up in the U.S.

Elian will be schooled at home indefinitely because the relatives fear Castro's "commandos might try to kidnap the **boy**," said family spokesman Armando Gutierrez.

But the family allowed a few reporters inside to show them an image in an oval mirror that a weeping Gonzalez said was the Virgin Mary.

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