

UN calls on U.S. to stop separating migrant children from parents



United Nations, June 8 (RHC)-- The United Nations has called on the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to "immediately halt" its controversial practice of separating Central American immigrant children from their parents at the southern border.

The UN human rights office has censured the Trump administration for its "zero tolerance" policy about undocumented immigrants in which some families have been separated after crossing the border. The rights office said that "children should never be detained for reasons related to their own or their parents' migration status. Detention is never in the best interests of the child and always constitutes a child rights violation."

Spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told a UN briefing that the practice of separating children from families "amounts to arbitrary and unlawful interference in family life, and is a serious violation of the rights of the child." She warned the U.S. policy had "led to people caught entering the country irregularly being subjected to criminal prosecution and having their children -- including extremely young children -- taken away from them as a result." A large number of children have been separated from their parents, who were arrested after they entered the United States.

Shamdasani said that several hundred children have been separated from their parents at the border since October. "The U.S. should immediately halt this practice," she said. "The use of immigration detention and family separation as a deterrent runs counter to human rights standards and principles," she noted.

The Trump administration has increased security on the U.S. border with Mexico and has pledged to prosecute refugees and migrants who cross it. The anti-immigration policy, which officially went into effect last month, has prompted heavy criticism from advocates for separating children from parents as a deterrence measure.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a "zero-tolerance policy" in early May, ordering federal prosecutors to peruse criminal charges against all referrals for illegally crossing the border.

The U.S. government cannot account for nearly 1,500 unaccompanied immigrant children, but denies responsibility, according to a report. The controversial policy, however, caused officials to lose track of children — an already existed problem — in the U.S. foster care system, according to an NBC report.

While parents are imprisoned, according to the report, their young children are turned over to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The children are then designated as "unaccompanied minors," and the government tries to connect them to family members who are already in the United States.

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