

U.S. judge finds Trump administration in contempt for deporting migrant minors



Washington, February 20 (RHC)-- A U.S. federal judge has found the United States government in contempt after authorities deported five young immigrants who were seeking to remain in the country under a programme for abused and neglected immigrant children.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Nathanael Cousins issued the civil order last week after finding the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services violated a 2018 preliminary injunction that required them to notify lawyers of any enforcement action against the young immigrants in a class-action lawsuit in California.

Despite the preliminary injunction, five immigrants who were seeking to stay in the US under a federal government programme for abused immigrant children were deported, and one of them was reportedly assaulted.

Mary Tanagho Ross, appellate staff attorney at Public Counsel's Immigrants' Rights Project, said she learned of the deportations months after one of the immigrants was back in Guatemala, where he was attacked by gang members.

"It is shocking the defendants didn't do their part to make sure ICE complied with a federal court order and they literally sent kids back to the lion's den," she said.

A Department of Justice spokesman declined to comment on the case. The lawsuit was settled last year between the U.S. government and lawyers for immigrants who sought to be covered by the programme after they turned 18. Applications are allowed until age 21.

Tanagho Ross said she would never have learned of the deportations but for another lawyer who mentioned one of his clients had applied for the programme, which leads to a green card, but got deported after losing a case for asylum.

The court ordered the agencies to return the five immigrants to the US by February 29 so long as they want to come back, and to pay \$500 for each day after that each one remains out of the country.

One of them has already been returned and is in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which plans to send him back to Guatemala in another two weeks now that the lawyers have been notified, the US government said in a court filing.

His application to the program for abused children has been approved but he will likely have to wait more than two years for a green card due to a cap on the number allowed to be issued each year, the government said.

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