

Search continues for parents of 628 children separated at U.S. border



San Diego, December 4 (RHC)-- In the United States, a court-appointed committee has yet to find the parents of 628 children separated at the U.S.-Mexico border early in the Donald Trump administration, according to a court filing that also said the government last week provided additional phone numbers to aid the long-running search.

Parents of 333 children are believed to be in the U.S., while parents of the other 295 are believed to have been deported. That does not necessarily mean the parents and the children are still separated, only that the committee has been unable to locate the parents. The committee has found other family members for 168 of the 628 children whose parents have yet to be located.

The joint filing by lawyers for the U.S. Justice Department and families offers the latest snapshot of efforts to reunite families under a “zero-tolerance” policy on illegal border crossings that resulted in thousands of separations when parents were criminally prosecuted.

On November 25, the administration provided the search committee with phone numbers and other information from a database of the Justice Department’s Executive Office for Immigration Review, which manages immigration courts, the filing said.

Lee Gelernt, a lawyer representing parents for the American Civil Liberties Union, said he had been pressing the administration for any additional information for the last year. “We just received this new information the day before Thanksgiving and only because the global outcry over the fact that these parents had not been found,” he said in an interview.

The 628 children whose parents are still not accounted for were separated before the judge’s order, going back to July 1, 2017, and were all released from federal custody before the June 2018 order. Children from that period are difficult to find because the government had inadequate tracking systems. They include hundreds separated during a trial run of the policy in El Paso, Texas, from July to November 2017 that was not publicly disclosed at the time.

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