

# *Washington says it needs two years to identify families separated at border*

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Washington, May 13 (RHC)-- In the U.S., the Donald Trump administration wants up to two years to track thousands of immigrant children separated from their families at the southern U.S. border. According to a Justice Department court filing in San Diego, it will take at least a year to review a total of about 47,000 cases of unaccompanied children taken into government custody between July 1, 2017 and June 25, 2018.

“Defendants estimate that identifying all possible children ... would take at least 12 months, and possibly up to 24 months,” the government wrote in the filing. According to reports, factors that would affect the time frame include the effectiveness of the predictive statistical model, the manpower needed to be dedicated to the manual review, and any follow-up meetings required.

In a response statement, the American Civil Liberties Union’s lead attorney for the case, Lee Gelernt, said the group strongly opposed the government’s proposed plan, adding, it does not treat the separations with the necessary urgency. “The government was able to quickly gather resources to tear these children away from their families and now they need to gather the resources.

The U.S. government has already released the children from its custody, the vast majority to parents or close relatives. However, the department of Customs and Border Protection did not begin tracing separated families as a searchable data set before April last year, according to the filing. As a result, records are spotty.

The Trump administration's policy of "zero tolerance" in May last year resulted in thousands of children being separated from their parents at the southern border and placed into HHS custody. The controversial policy, which called for the criminal prosecution of all adult migrants who were detained after illegally crossing the southern U.S. border, created a massive outcry and the backlash forced Washington to walk it back just three months later.

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