



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 2018

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION CONDEMNS THE SEPARATION OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS

On this National Day of Action for Children, we call on the American government to do right by children and end the shameful practice of breaking up innocent immigrant families.

In recent weeks, the U.S. government has systematically separated immigrant parents from their children and babies as they arrive at the border, many seeking refuge. Since the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) announced a “zero tolerance” policy for unauthorized border migration, parents arriving at the border have automatically been placed in criminal proceedings and separated from their children without being told where their children are or when they will be reunited. Children, some as young as a year old, have been reportedly housed away from their parents and siblings on military bases. This policy and practice changes the definition of who qualifies as an unaccompanied minor and criminalizes anyone who enters or reenters the border without authorization, even those planning to apply for asylum.

According to DHS reports, over 600 children were separated from their parents during just two weeks in May. Separating families is not only cruel and inhumane, it goes against our deepest values as Americans **and crosses the line of decency**. These parents are doing what any good parent would do. They are fleeing some of the most dangerous countries in the world to save their families, only to have their babies and children taken from them.

The administration’s decision to punish parents by taking their children away is only the latest in a series of anti-immigrant policies being carried out to break up families and demonize immigrants. We have already seen working mothers and fathers who have lived in the U.S. for decades be detained and deported. Hundreds of thousands of legal Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients will soon lose their status. They will be forced to decide whether to leave their American children behind to be raised by others, or take them with them to countries where their lives may be in danger.

As Americans, we value the contributions of immigrants who come here to make a better life for their families. Our country has long been a refuge to those fleeing persecution and violence. When our government treats newcomers and asylum seekers as criminals, and separates them from their children, we lose sight of who we are as a nation. Children belong with their families.

The San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission calls for our local, state and national leaders to fight this policy, stand up for immigrant families that help make America strong, and stop the terrorizing of immigrant children and parents.