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CGRS Statement: Calling for an Immediate End to Family Detention

The Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS) welcomes the leadership of Representative Zoe Lofgren, Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, Representative Luis Gutiérrez, and 133 other members of the House of Representatives who yesterday sent a [letter](#) to the Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson calling for an end to the inhumane detention of immigrant mothers and their children.

CGRS has [documented](#) that women and children from Central America are fleeing domestic violence, rape, physical assaults, and other forms of persecution that their governments are utterly failing to control. Gender-based violence is ubiquitous in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, which have some of the highest rates of femicide, including murders of girls, in the world. The mental health problems that often arise for survivors of violence in the aftermath of traumatic experiences are exacerbated by the conditions of their detention. As mothers see their children languish in detention—enduring malnutrition, untreated illnesses, delays in development, and other harms detailed in the House letter--feelings of guilt and helplessness cause further hardship.

Refugee women and children arrive in the United States seeking safety and dignity, and should be afforded the chance to claim protection through our legal channels with full due process. Families who are detained face challenges in finding legal representation, which can be essential for establishing their claims and avoiding return to the life-threatening circumstances they fled. Nearly 90% of recently detained families were found to have a credible fear of persecution on which asylum claims could be based. There is no excuse for forcing these mothers and children to endure the harms of detention in order to exercise their right to seek asylum. Family detention is contrary to our national commitment to human rights, our global leadership on refugee protection, and basic principles of justice.

CGRS joins members of the House of Representatives in asking Secretary Johnson to end the abhorrent practice of family detention.

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Consensus is growing that the practice of family detention is a flawed policy that must be stopped – see what others are saying:

[American Immigration Lawyers' Association](#)

[Human Rights First](#)

[Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service](#)

[National Immigrant Justice Center](#)

[New York Bar Association](#)

[Women's Refugee Commission](#)