

URGENT ACTION

SHUT DOWN MIGRANT FAMILY DETENTION CENTER

The South Texas Family Residential Center (“Dilley”) in Dilley, Texas, is the only migrant family detention facility in the United States, and it is emblematic of the cruelty of the US migration detention system. Families detained there have reported prolonged incarceration without due process, denial of medical care, and inadequate access to clean drinking water. Infants and children have experienced alarming weight loss, families are frequently separated while detained, and children are denied opportunities for joy and play. Dilley should be shut down immediately, and US authorities must end the detention of migrant children and families once and for all.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **UA 53.26**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security
300 7th St SW,
Washington, DC 20024,
United States
Email: dhssecretary@hq.dhs.gov

Dear Secretary Mullin,

I am deeply concerned about the **children and families that are detained in the South Texas Family Residential Center (Dilley)** in Dilley, Texas, where ICE is detaining hundreds of parents and children under inhumane conditions:

- Families have been held for weeks on end, violating the Flores Settlement Agreement, which sets out minimum standards for the treatment of migrant children in government custody, including limits on the length of time that children can be detained;
- Most families never get to speak with an attorney or appear before a judge before they are deported, and many are sent back to dangerous, life-threatening conditions;
- People with chronic health conditions or medical emergencies have been denied necessary care and infants and children are experiencing alarming weight loss;
- Families have been denied access to adequate clean drinking water, forced in many cases to drink tap water that is foul-smelling and known to cause upset stomachs;
- Children frequently are not allowed access to educational opportunities or even crayons to play with.

Detaining children under any circumstances violates international law. The Dilley detention facility is cruel, dangerous, and inhumane. I urge you to end these abuses immediately: shut down Dilley and release all those detained there.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Family detention is a key part of the mass detention and deportation system in the United States, used as a tool to expand immigration enforcement. The issue reflects a systemic detention regime affecting more than 6,200 children, toddlers, and newborn babies. Family detention is not being used as an exceptional safeguard but as a routine policy practice. Families are being held for prolonged periods, often for months, in violation of the 20-day limit set under the Flores Settlement Agreement.

Serious due process concerns are present throughout the system. Access to legal counsel is limited, and in some cases effectively unavailable. Individuals are frequently not given clear or timely information about immigration procedures or their rights. Deportations are reported to occur without a meaningful opportunity to pursue legal claims, raising concerns under the principles of due process and of non-refoulement.

A central feature of the system is the use of coercion through family separation. There are documented examples of a five-year-old child threatened with removal from their family, a teenager pressured to abandon their claim under threat of separation upon turning 18, and a breastfeeding mother separated from her United States citizen baby for more than 100 days. These situations illustrate the use of fear and separation as a method of enforcement rather than isolated incidents. Conditions within detention facilities are widely reported as inhumane and degrading. Individuals face inadequate access to food, clean water, hygiene supplies, and basic care. People in detention experience deterioration in both mental and physical health, with children facing significant risks of long-term trauma. Medical care is often disrupted, including for individuals with ongoing or chronic health needs.

High-risk groups are disproportionately affected. Pregnant individuals often lack adequate prenatal care. Infants and children are held in unsuitable environments for their developmental needs. The migration-related detention of children is strictly prohibited in international law as it can never be in their best interests. Community based alternatives exist for those that need them and are more effective while avoiding the harms associated with detention.

Immigration detention is only allowed in the most exceptional of circumstances. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, like anyone else, must benefit from a legal presumption of liberty. Therefore, if they are subject to any deprivation of liberty, it must be clearly prescribed by law and strictly justified by a legitimate purpose that is necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. States have an obligation to ensure that conditions of detention meet international human rights law and standards. This includes protection against torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; access to medical care; exercise; and the ability to communicate with the outside world including consulates, attorneys, and family. ICE also has Family Residential Standards which dictate the operation of facilities housing families detained for immigration-related reasons, which require access to legal resources, family unity, clean and secure detention conditions, education, recreation time, nutritionally balanced meals, and medical care.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: November 15, 2026

NAME AND PRONOUN: Families Detained in Dilley (they/them)