



Violence and Cruelty as a Deterrent Strategy

## **UNITED STATES - Migrant Children Detained and Separated from Their Families**

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“From our starting point, all of us who decided to leave our places of origin have lived dark, difficult, complicated, uncertain moments, and although it was a torture to make this journey living in misery, we can say that we are survivors.”

Pascal Ustin Dubuisson, *Survivors: Citizens of the World*

“In these times of exclusion and barbarism, where the gap of inequality and injustice has grown overwhelmingly, political and economic elites do not give up their attempts to obtain their ends and interests at the expense of majorities and the suffering of others. Therefore, executioners disguise themselves as victims and do not even have the decorum to avoid blaming / criminalizing the children of the dispossessed.”

Urban Aribide

“Detention of minors related to migration should never be applied ... in the interest of the child. There are always other options.”

Manfred Nowak

In various regions of the world, migration processes and policies are structured based on complex bilateral relations between countries with different levels of socioeconomic development and under unequal power relations regimes. Understanding these links between nation-states with asymmetric geopolitical positions is a relevant factor in understanding migration, its causes and destinations. While in some countries there are adverse conditions (high levels of poverty and violence) that force many groups of the population to leave, other national states have job opportunities and demand a labor force that attracts migrants.

However, in the case of the current US government, it has been characterized by a reductionist, unilateral and violent vision towards the processes of irregular human mobility that originated in Central America

and are directed towards the United States (EU). In this context, as regards migration, the current president of the United States has distinguished himself, both in discursive terms and in his policies and actions, for being an accomplished racist who, based on prejudices and lies, holds migrants responsible (especially Mexicans and Central Americans) of various US problems. Far from recognizing the sociodemographic, economic and cultural contribution of migrants, the head of the US executive has distinguished himself by having immigration policy that not only transgresses several of that country's internal legal frameworks, but also openly violates the human rights of migrants.

The repercussions for thousands of migrants are several and have not been expected: detention and illegal deprivation of liberty, denial of the right to request asylum and access to treatment as refugees, lack of recognition of their character as forced migrants, suffering Unjustified criminalization processes, massive and illegal raids, abuse of authority and physical aggressions, the refusal to receive humanitarian aid and to have a dignified treatment, among others. This series of mediations has involved thousands of people stranded at the borders, thousands interned in detention centers in the US and many assaulted. But the most drastic thing has been the death of several migrants and their children, derived from these policies of violence and cruelty.

Within the framework of various actions (the repeated attempt to build the wall, the increase and strengthening of the Border Patrol and ICE), undoubtedly one of the most controversial and inhuman measures has been the deliberate and illegal actions to separate migrant children from their families and their seclusion / isolation in detention centers in the US. Recently the news spread in various media that more than 5,400 children have been separated from their parents during the current US administration; and many of them have not yet reunited with their relatives.

The situation is alarming for several reasons: children who have not committed any crime are criminalized, they are subjected to extreme psychological stress by abruptly separating them from their parents and relatives in a foreign country and a different language, they are not recognized as children in complicated precarious situations and they are treated as criminals in detention centers. In fact, they are not recognized the right to a decent life and with enough material conditions to meet their needs. This occurs in the context of which, during the fiscal year of 2019 in the US, a historical record of more than 76 thousand unaccompanied minors detained by ICE and the Border Patrol was reached.

This is only the confirmation of the contempt and xenophobia of the US president towards migrants and their children, but also of his absolute indifference to human rights and respect for the legal frameworks of his own country. In the case of Central Americans and as documented by various reports [1], far from being "criminals" - as the fictional and discriminatory narrative of the US government argues -, these are populations highly vulnerable and precarious, who left their places of origin for reasons beyond their control and forced and against their will. They fled to survive and escape the lack of job opportunities, hunger wages and lack of future, as well as the contexts of violence related to organized crime and gangs [2].

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## Footnotes

[1] <https://redodem.org/informes/>.

[2] <https://redodem.org/informes/>.