

25 June 2018

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions  
US Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

And copy to  
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo  
US Office of Chief Protocol  
2201 C Street NW, Room 1238  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Attorney General Jeff Sessions

Graduate Women International welcomes the executive order recently signed by US President Donald Trump rescinding the directive that children should be separated from their refugee parents once they have entered USA at the Mexican border. However there is still much concern regarding the treatment of the families and the harsh conditions under which they are being detained.

We are also alarmed to note reports about those families who have already been separated. There appears to be no records of where each child has been placed and, certainly, parents are not able to ascertain the whereabouts and current situation of their children. In fact, recent reports state that these children are being placed in “foster care” – right across the US.

GWI is an international NGO with a main focus on women’s and children’s rights and the importance of education, understanding and friendship to enhance global peace and sustainable communities.

We are most concerned about the trauma and long lasting psychological effects of this separation and the very harsh conditions under which both parents and children are detained.

It is inconceivable that a country that upholds family values would be making use of children as political pawns. Erika Guevara-Rosas, Amnesty International’s Americas Director stated on 18 June: “The severe mental suffering that officials have intentionally inflicted on these families for coercive purposes, means that these acts meet the definitions of torture under both US and international law”. An important factor is, as reported by Amnesty International when they recently interviewed 17 asylum-seeking parents who were forcibly separated from their children, that all but three of them had entered the USA legally to request asylum.

The damage to all family members of these refugees, the people who must enforce such separation regulations as well as the image of the US is too great to contemplate.

We call on the US State Department and Department of Justice, as a matter of urgency, to restore the children back to their parents.

We also call on these departments to rethink the measures to be taken to assist refugees and ensure they are treated with dignity, in line with US children's rights laws, US obligations regarding refugees and International Protocols. This rethink of Attorney General Jeff Sessions' policy of 'zero-tolerance' would not include building a wall between Mexico and USA as actions such as this have not ever brought about a lasting peaceful and sustainable resolution.

Yours faithfully

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SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

