

## Protecting the Most Vulnerable: A Call to Action On Behalf of Detained Children

Universal Children's Day is a time to celebrate the promise of children across the globe. It is a time for governments to affirm their commitment to the rights and protections that allow children to reach their full potential.

In the spirit of Universal Children's Day, we call on the United States and the international community to take immediate steps to address a growing scourge on the international system—the detention of migrant children, including asylum seekers. Many of these children are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. They may have fled to escape persecution, gang violence, family abuse or trafficking. They are among the most vulnerable children in the world and they need urgent protection.

Consistent with international law and standards, governments should refrain from detaining migrant children. If children are detained, governments should ensure that it is only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time. In those exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to detain children, governments must ensure that children are placed in living quarters suitable for children and that they receive the necessary services, including health care, education and legal assistance.

The U.S should be a model for the international community on the protection of migrant children. But our country falls unacceptably short on this score. To reform our own system and to set an example for the international community, the Administration and Congress must act now to:

- Ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Support and fully fund alternatives to detention programs so that the detention of migrant children and families with children is a measure of last resort and only for the most exceptional circumstances.
- Ensure that the Department of Homeland Security immediately transfers unaccompanied migrant children to the care of the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement.
- Ensure that children who must be detained or held in custody are held in the least restrictive setting appropriate for their needs and circumstances.
- Ensure that the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency provides timely public information on the number of children in ICE detention and the location of facilities where they are being held.
- Provide children in immigration detention or custody with legal services, including pro bono counsel, and with a guardian who will ensure that any decisions made are in the best interests of the child.

--Ensure that children in immigration detention or custody receive appropriate services including education and medical and mental health care.

This Call to Action is endorsed by the following organizations and individuals working to protect vulnerable children:

*Organizations:*

**Africans In Milwaukee Inc.**  
**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**  
**American Friends Service Committee**  
**Amnesty International USA**  
**Arab American and Chaldean Council**  
**Arab American Community Coalition**  
**Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore**  
**Breakthrough: building human rights culture**  
**Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition**  
**Casa de Esperanza**  
**Center for Victims of Torture**  
**Chaldean Federation of America**  
**Church World Service**  
**Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)**  
**El Pueblo, Inc.**  
**Episcopal Migration Ministries**  
**FaithAction International House**  
**First Friends: Elizabeth Detention Center Visitors Program**  
**Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project**  
**Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center**  
**Freedom House**  
**Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)**  
**Hispanic Development Corporation**  
**Homies Unidos**  
**Human Rights First**  
**Human Rights Watch**  
**Immigrant Legal Resource Center**  
**Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project, Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs**  
**Interfaith Refugee Action Team - Elizabeth (IRATE)**  
**Jesuit Refugee Service/USA**  
**Korean American Resource & Cultural Center, Chicago, IL**  
**Korean Resource Center, Los Angeles, CA**  
**Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc**  
**Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, El Paso**  
**The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area**  
**Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**  
**National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild**  
**National Immigrant Justice Center**

**National Immigrant Solidarity Network**  
**National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)**, Los Angeles, CA  
**NC Justice Center**, Raleigh, NC  
**Northwest Immigrant Rights Project**  
**NYSDA Immigrant Defense Project**  
**Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center**  
**Physicians for Human Rights**  
**Political Asylum Project of Austin**  
**Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project**  
**Public Counsel**  
**Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network (RMIAN)**  
**School Sisters of Notre Dame - Global Justice & Peace Commission**  
**South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow**  
**Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)**  
**St. Joseph Social Service Center**  
**St. Matthew Immigration/Detention Committee**  
**Survivors of Torture, International**  
**United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society**  
**United Methodist Immigrant Center**  
**U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants**  
**Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project**  
**Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children**  
**World Relief**  
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