



Key Points Regarding Humanitarian Crisis at U.S.-Mexico Border
July 10, 2014

1. What is happening at the U.S.-Mexico border is a humanitarian crisis. It reflects humanitarian crises that have been occurring on the ground in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala; the crises in these countries are causing forced displacement of people internally and now across international borders.
2. Children and families are leaving their countries to escape violence. The dangers in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are not new; since 2008, there has been a steady stream of people fleeing these countries. Since 2008, there has been a 712% increase in the number of asylum applications of people from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala made in countries other than the United States, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In fact, children are fleeing to Nicaragua, which is a very poor country, because they are afraid.
3. In 2013, the UNHCR interviewed more than 400 children from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala who were arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border. It found that 60% of the children had legitimate asylum claims and claims to international protection. These children were not safe in their home countries and were not being protected by their governments.
4. Through its supplemental budget request, the Obama administration is prioritizing enforcement over protection. The request focuses on detention and deterrence rather than on humanitarian needs. Increased funding to deal with the humanitarian crisis is critical; these children and families must be provided with care, food, and legal representation, especially given the violence and poverty from which they are fleeing. Moreover, there must be a focus on addressing the root causes of the crisis.
5. The legal protections afforded by the anti-trafficking law signed into law in 2008 with overwhelming bi-partisan support cannot be watered down. Children and families need adequate time and assistance for full and fair adjudication of their cases.
6. The children and families must be afforded full protection and proper hearings before experienced adjudicators, as proscribed by U.S. law. As it stands now, a majority of children do not have attorneys representing them during deportation proceedings. Without proper hearings and proper, effective adjudication, we will be sending children and families back to serious harm and placing them back in the hands of persecutors and traffickers. A law suit has been filed against the United States for failure to provide attorneys to children.
7. A surge of resources is critical to ensure that the humanitarian protection system works, is fair, and upholds American values.

8. Children and families need to be held in appropriate humane conditions, given food and water, and not held in *las hieleras* —or “the freezers — the chilly holding cells at many stations along the U.S.-Mexico border.