

## Don't Put Mothers and Their Children in Prison

Today's Twitter feed is abuzz with the news that the [White House](#) intends to announce administrative action for some of the nation's estimated 11 million undocumented Americans. While the contours of the relief remain unclear, President Obama's action undoubtedly moves the immigration reform debate to a new place and promises to make real – at least in a limited way for the very near future – the right to family unity guaranteed by the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) at articles 17 and 23.

But as the administration moves to keep families together with one hand, the other hand is doubling down on the detention of families fleeing to the United States in search of asylum.

The United States is required to uphold the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, but earlier this year the Obama administration began using immigration detention to deter asylum seekers in a misguided and draconian approach to people fleeing persecution. Although President Obama has framed the arrival of asylum seekers from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala as a humanitarian crisis, the approach taken by the administration has been anything but humanitarian.

But just days before the planned announcement of administrative relief for undocumented Americans, the administration reiterated its commitment to the imprisonment of families seeking asylum by [confirming it plans to open](#) the massive Dilley, Texas family detention center before the end of the year.

“The Administration is playing more games with the lives of women and children fleeing violence. This time it's a shell game moving people from one jail to another without regard for their well-being or human rights,” said [Crystal Williams](#) of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

There's a dire need for the president to take administrative action on immigration. The first step should be ending the detention of families in the United States.

*By: [Michele Garnett McKenzie](#), The Advocates for Human Rights' director of advocacy.*