

May 18, 2016

To the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Sarah Saldaña:

First and foremost, greetings to you on this occasion. We address you with the aim of expressing all of the concerns that afflict us in this moment. We are the women and children detained in the Family Detention Center of South Texas.

To start, we did not leave our countries to live a picture-perfect life in the United States; we fled so that we would not be killed. We came here seeking asylum, as is our right, and instead we have been subjected to a new hell of detention.

Presently our main concern is the delayed response to and lack of information concerning our immigration process, specifically with respect to the requirement of demonstrating a reasonable fear of persecution. We have been awaiting a response to our credible fear interviews well beyond that which is stipulated under federal and international law. Despite numerous attempts to obtain decisions over the course of days and weeks in detention, these inquiries have had no effect.

For this reason we ask, as a matter of urgency, for a prompt, timely, and immediate decision in our cases, especially in light of the negative physical, psychological, and emotional effects that the delay has had on ourselves and on our children. These effects include, among other things, deep depression giving rise to suicidal thoughts, prolonged insomnia and loss of appetite, and a sense of desperation. (Please see the appendix of testimonies on family detention attached to this letter).

Given the urgency of this matter, we also request a meeting with you, as soon as may be possible, in order to inform you of the harms which we suffer in detention.

We thank you ahead of time for your support and may God bless you.

Sincerely,
The mothers of the South Texas Family Residential Center

~~Concepcion~~ Emeria Estrada Gonzalez
Concepcion Rosales Padilla
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Silvia-M. Merida Monzon
Elisa Rosa Ortiz

~~Concepcion~~ Coralia del Carmen Sanchez

Rosa Hernandez

~~Handwritten signature~~ ~~Handwritten signature~~ ~~Handwritten signature~~

Sindy Pamela Aguilar Chavez

Gladys Prudencia Ruiz Andrade

~~Handwritten signature~~

Keyra Zelaya Morales

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Luz Saraid Ramos Rosales

Mario Ester Rosales Ventura

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aracely H.

~~Handwritten signature~~ Astrod Dayana de León

~~Handwritten signature~~
Melizian

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Luz Melania Lopez Amador

~~Handwritten signature~~

~~Handwritten signature~~ Denia Yaneht Alvarez

María alba Reyes Men breño

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Pamda Sacheline Rivera Beltran.

Luz Melanio Lopez Amador

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Dora Fidelicia Rodriguez

ANA CANTABERO GUERREROS

~~Handwritten signature~~

~~Handwritten signature~~

Sayda Meza Guillen

~~Handwritten signature~~

R.T.

~~Handwritten signature~~

Maria Elena Ascencio Leiva

Sandra Maria Lopez Esteban
Suyapa Ramirez Martinez

Olivia Torres

A.A.Ch.R.

B. R. P.
~~Fuente~~



Appendix 1: Testimonials on Family Detention

Over 50 women and their children are currently over-detained in the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. These women have all spent over 20 days in detention, contrary to federal law and international human rights law. They have faced deep psychological and physical harm due to their prolonged detention.

This document provides a summary of these impacts, as well as excerpts from individual testimonials.

Summary of harms due to family detention

Harms on mothers

- An inability to be a mother
- The long wait and lack of any information creates confusion, anxiety, and desperation
- Loss of sleep
- Weight loss
- Dark and suicidal thoughts
- Sadness, anxiety, and stress because of the impacts on the children, and their inability to provide answers

Harms on children

- Lack of interest and ability to go to school
- A change in attitude making children more aggressive and hyperactive
- Inability to sleep
- Deep sadness and depression
- Frequent crying
- Constant fear
- Lack of appetite
- Frequent sickness

Personal testimonials on the harms of family detention

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“It has been a long time since we have been here, almost one month. I hardly sleep and I do not want to leave my room. My daughter feels sad and restless and anxious and is unwilling to go to school.”

“A long time in detention affects me physically. It makes me desperate not to know anything. My daughter does not want to eat or go to school because she says we are leaving soon. She cries a lot. She feels desperate as well.”

“Being in detention has deprived us of our freedom. Being in this place for myself and my son has caused a lot of stress. Our children get sick and we have no power to do anything for them.”

“For me psychologically, I am in a state of depression, anguish, and anxiety waiting. I think if we at least had answers to our questions about why the delay, then it would be easier to understand. Also our families are psychologically affected by not knowing what will happen to us here, locked up for so long. Our mothers are also sick with worry. My son is only 3 years. Psychologically, he is traumatized because maybe we are living in better conditions but we are always subjects to the rules and you do not feel like you are in your own space. He asks every day when we will go because other people leave but not us. He asks if we are trapped here because we are bad people. But I have no answers to these endless questions.”

“For me and my daughter, we are psychologically affected. My daughter's demeanor has changed a lot. Now she is very aggressive and she doesn't want to eat the food or go to the school. She cries a lot because she wants to leave. This hurts me and I am affected a lot because I cannot say anything to respond to her.”

“It has affected us greatly. We feel desperate. There are no answers to my questions and therefore I do not know what to say to my child when he gets sad because he misses his dad. And in the same way, I also feel bad since there is no solution to my case.”

“A long time in detention has affected me in many ways. One of the first ways it has affected us is that my son is very sick. He has lost a lot of weight and is very dehydrated. I have had to fight to give him medication. Another way is that my son is very fearful here. He says he wants to leave because there are so many police here. Also, I have not slept a week while being here and my son wakes at all hours. He wakes up and says he wants to go home and go to his room. Finally, my son does not want to eat or leave the building [we are detained in] because he is so desperate. We are both depressed.”

“The psychological repercussions on me and my son are the biggest problems. There is a lot of stress and pressure being in the same place with others sharing the same problem. The problems go beyond physical health, we also see that some [are detained] for only 5 days while others remain here, even though we all just want to be with our families. We did not leave our countries to live a picture perfect life in the United States, we left to escape being killed.”

De que forma le ha sido difícil (a usted y su hijo/a) estar en detención por tanto tiempo?

- > Para mi psicológicamente en un estado de depresión angustia y ansiedad a la espera, creo que si por lo menos tuvieramos respuestas a nuestras preguntas de porque la demora seria mas facil de entender; tambien nuestras familias se ven afectadas psicológicamente al no saber que va a pasar con nosotras aqui encerradas tanto tiempo. las madres de nosotras tambien se enferman.
- > mi hijo solo tiene 3 añitos psicológicamente esta traumatado porque estamos talvez viviendo en mejores condiciones pero siempre sujetos a reglas no se sienten en su espacio. pregunta todos los días cuando nos vamos, porque otras personas salen y nosotros no. que si somos malos por estar aqui atrapados. un sin fin de preguntas a las cuales no tengo respuestas.

A mi y a mi hija nos a afectado psicológicamente el comportamiento de mi hija a cambiado mucho esta muy agresiva no quiere la comida ni ir a la escuela y ora mucho por que se quiere ir i eso me duele i me afecta mucho por que yo no puedo decirle nada ni responderle nada.

Estando mucho tiempo aqui por un mes casi no duermo casi no como ya no quiero salir del cuarto mi hija se siente triste inquieta sin ganas de ir a la escuela

De que forma le ha sido difícil (a usted y su hijo/a) estar en detención por tanto tiempo? física mente es desesperante no saber nada mi hija no quiere comer ni ir ala escuela porque dice que no nos vamos a irnos pronto llora mucho se desespera

R= que nos han privado de nuestra libertad, a nosotros y a mi hijo tanto que el estar en este lugar se llena de estrés y nuestros hijos se enferman y no hay como poder hacer algo por ellos

- Uno de los primeros fue que mi hijo se me enfermó a tal grado de bajar mucho de peso y entrar en deshidratación y tener que pelear para que me le dieran medicamentos.
 - Temor de parte de mi hijo al estar aquí ya que dice que quiere irse porque hay muchos policías.
 - No dormir de una semana hacia aquí, mi niño se despierta a todas horas diciendo que quiere ir a su casa y a su cuarto.
 - Mi hijo no quiere comer ni salir de la habitación estamos entrando en una desesperación o depresión los dos.
-

De que forma le ha sido difícil (a usted y su hijo/a) estar en detención por tanto tiempo?

La repercusión psicológica en mi y mi hijo es el mayor problema la presión de estar en el mismo lugar con otros compartiendo el mismo problema aqueja más allá de la salud física, el ver que quien llegó hasta 5 días después se fue hace días y uno aún aquí queriendo estar con la familia.

"No salimos de nuestro país para vivir una vida color rosa en Estados Unidos, salimos huyendo de que nos mataran."

Nos a afectado enormemente estamos desesperados, no hay respuesta a mis preguntas y por lo tanto no se que decirle a mi niña cuando, se pone triste por que extraña a su papá y xq no y lo mismo yo tambien me pongo mal xq no hay solución a mi caso.
