



Commission on Human Rights

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CONTACT: Alicia McCauley, amcauley@cchr.nyc.gov, 212-416-0105

NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF OFFICIAL HUMAN RIGHTS AGENCIES, AND 20 HUMAN RIGHTS AGENCIES ACROSS THE NATION SIGN OPEN LETTER CONDEMNING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AT US-MEXICO BORDER

Open letter argues lack of medical care, potable water and basic hygiene, as well as the ongoing family separation practice, violate the most basic human rights precepts demanding that all human beings be treated with dignity and respect

NEW YORK –The NYC Commission on Human Rights, the International Association of Human Rights Agencies, and 20 state and local human rights agencies from across the nation today released an open letter condemning the conditions under which undocumented immigrants are being held in federally-run US detention centers. Leaders from around the country signed on to the letter demanding an end to the deplorable conditions of detention and urging other human rights leaders to do the same.

“As human rights leaders we condemn the conditions under which undocumented immigrants are being held in U.S. immigration detention, specifically the conditions of detention of children, pregnant immigrants, and immigrants with disabilities and other medical needs, and the separation of families,” the letter states. It goes on to highlight the unsanitary housing conditions, lack of food and water, lack of access to medical care and medication, and basic hygiene.

“Whenever the most basic human needs are blatantly disregarded or denied, our fundamental human rights are being violated,” **Robin S. Toma, President of IAOHRA** stated. “Knowing what we know about the mistreatment of children and pregnant women by our federal government, IAOHRA, as the long-standing network of leaders of state and local governmental human and civil rights agencies, cannot be silent. We call upon everyone to speak up and out for immediate action to respect basic human rights!”

“The United States has a long and storied history of providing hope, safety, and security to people from every part of the world, and the families arriving at our southern border are no exception,” said **Carmelyn P. Malalis, Chair and Commissioner of the NYC Commission on Human Rights**. “Our country has long been a refuge for those suffering abuse and persecution. However, the treatment of people in U.S. immigration detention today is nothing short of state sanctioned bigotry. As a human rights official, a lawyer, a daughter of immigrants and a mother,

I am outraged by the conditions of detention at our southern border. The federal government is capable of treating every person in immigration detention with dignity and respect. There is no reason for people to be denied potable water, medicine, food, and necessities for basic hygiene like soap and toothbrushes. There is no reason for minor children to be taking care of other children. There is no reason to separate newborn babies from their parents or to tear families apart. If cruelty is the point, point taken. The eyes of the world are upon us. We will not look away from this humanitarian crisis. We will not stay silent. We will not be complicit in these abuses. And I urge every American with a conscience, especially those who work in human rights, to stand now and demand an end to these deplorable conditions of detention.”

“The Trump administration’s gross disregard for the basic human rights of migrants seeking refuge, including women and children, ought to be condemned by all those with a conscience. No family should experience the appalling conditions that migrants have been forced to endure at the border,” said **Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs**. “New York will continue to protect the rights of immigrant communities, provide free and safe immigration legal help to New Yorkers who are concerned about their immigration status, and ensure access to relief for those most vulnerable, particularly those seeking asylum in the U.S.”

- International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies
- New York City Commission on Human Rights
- Cambridge Human Rights Commission
- Chicago Commission on Human Rights
- City of Anderson Human Relations Department
- City of Cincinnati Office of Human Relations
- City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission
- Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities
- Howard County Office of Human Rights
- Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations
- Amy Sneirson, Executive Director, Maine Human Rights Commission
- Michigan Department of Civil Rights
- New Jersey Division of Civil Rights
- New York State Division of Human Rights
- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
- Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations
- Alicia Weigel, Commissioner, Austin Human Rights Commission
- Jared D. Breckenredge, Commissioner, Austin Human Rights Commission
- Nathan White, Commissioner, Austin Human Rights Commission
- City of Albuquerque Mayor’s Office of Equity and Inclusion
- Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion
- Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations
- Albuquerque Human Rights Board

***Statement of International Association
of Official Human Rights Agencies and
Individual Local and State Government Human Rights Agencies***

Condemning the Conditions of Detention of Undocumented Immigrants

The International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies, a network of state and local government human rights agencies, together with the undersigned individual member and non-member government human rights agencies, enforce local and/or state human rights and civil rights laws, and work to promote and further human rights principles and positive intergroup relations across the United States. As human rights leaders, we condemn the conditions under which undocumented immigrants are being held in U.S. immigration detention, specifically the conditions of detention of children, pregnant immigrants, and immigrants with disabilities and other medical needs, and the separation of families. The failure to provide sanitary housing conditions, including, but not limited to, adequate space and comfort for sleeping; adequate water, nutrition, and access to food;

comprehensive medical attention and access to medication; and adequate hygiene, including showers, soap, hygiene products, toothbrushes, and toothpaste, violates basic human rights precepts demanding that all people be treated with dignity and respect, and the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of national origin and ethnicity. As domestic human rights experts, we are compelled to speak out against such gross disregard for the human rights and dignity of undocumented immigrants and call on all human rights officials to join us in our demand to end these deplorable conditions of detention immediately, which endanger not only the health, safety, and welfare of those held in detention but also their families and communities.

The NYC Commission on Human rights enforces one of the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the nation. If you believe you have been discriminated against based on perceived alienage, race or national origin call 718-722-3131 or dial 311 and ask for human rights. The Commission will never ask for immigration status.

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