
US: Trump Administration Misses Deadline To Reunite 3,000 Kids

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Some 1,600 kids have not been reunited with their parents after being separated at the US-Mexico border. Advocates say some kids lost in bureaucratic 'black hole'.

The Donald Trump administration has missed the deadline to reunite some 3,000 minors with their parents after they had been separated at the U.S.-Mexican border under the administration's 'zero tolerance' immigration policy.

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Only about 1,400 of 3,000 children that U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw ordered the government to reunite by Thursday, [July 26](#) have been given over to their parents.

Government lawyers said that 711 of the kids were "not eligible" for reunification. Of that number 431 of the minors couldn't be reunified because the parents were no longer in the United States - the majority were deported or self-deported, being told by U.S. immigration authorities they would be reunited with their children faster if they left the country.

After Thursday's court filing with Judge Sabraw, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) official Chris Meekins told reporters the agency was awaiting guidance from the court about how to proceed with the children of 431 parents no longer in the United States. They are currently under the custody of the DHHS Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Douglas Almendarez who was separated from his 11-year-old son at the border returned to Honduras after being told his child was already back in the country.

"They told me: 'He's ahead of you'," Almendarez, 37, told Reuters from his home outside the capital city of Tegucigalpa. "It was a lie."

Between mid-May and late June, the Department of Justice implemented a 'zero tolerance' policy at the U.S.-Mexico border as an attempt to deter the influx of Central American migrants and asylum seekers trying to enter the country. Over 2,500 people were arrested, most with kids in tow. [Sabraw](#) demanded that all kids forcibly separated from their parents - some 3,000 - be reunited in his June ruling.

After public outcry Trump vowed to end the separations, a move he was doubly forced to comply with under Sabraw's June ruling.

Lee Gelernt, attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which brought the case against the government, accused the government of "picking and choosing who is eligible for reunification" and said it would "hold the government accountable and get these families back together."

The government has not yet provided the ACLU with information about future reunifications, including the location and timing of them.

"This information is critical both to ensure that these reunifications have in fact taken place and to enable class counsel to arrange for legal and other services for the reunited families," says an ACLU statement.

Immigration advocates say some kids were lost into a "black hole" as the government had no set system in place to reunite families.

Maria Odom, vice president of legal services for Kids in Need of Defense, said two children were sent from New York to Texas to be reunited with their mother. When they arrived, they learned she had been deported, Odom told reporters.

Odom said her group does not know where the children, aged 9 and 14, have been taken.

It was an example, she said, "of how impossible it is to track these children once they are placed in the black hole of reunification."

The ACLU and government lawyers will return to court on Friday to discuss how to proceed.
