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Judge's Ruling on Release of Undocumented Children Creates Uncertainty

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U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee gave the federal government until Aug. 3 to show why she should not issue an order for the release of the women and children within 90 days.

“This problem is the result of a government policy that began a year ago in response to the flood of Central American children and their families arriving in the United States, especially in Texas,” Carlos Holguin, one of the plaintiff’s in the lawsuit that prompted Gee’s decision, told EFE in an interview.

Though Holguin hailed the ruling, he said it doesn’t solve the problem of minors seeking refuge in this country.

“The United States has moved the Mexico-U.S. border to the border of Mexico with Guatemala,” he said.

According to the activist attorney, “under pressure from the United States, the Mexican government is now detaining Central American refugees in the state of Chiapas and reducing the number of refugees that manage to reach the United States.

Gee said last Friday that detaining these undocumented migrants violates the 1997 court decision known as the Flores settlement that set specific legal requirements for housing immigrant minors.

Though the Homeland Security Department announced that it will review the judge’s decision

and respond about the justification for detention centers by the deadline set by Gee, it remains uncertain whether it will appeal her ruling.

Meanwhile, pro-immigrant groups said that all this creates a serious need for legal services for these minors in case they are released after the three-month period established by the judge.

"We're studying how to find funds and resources to be able to represent these women and children, because those who are freed will have the chance to seek asylum," Martha Arevalo, executive director of the Central American Resource Center, or CARECEN, told EFE.

In stressing the grave situation of violence and death threats facing youngsters in Central America, Holguin believes that undocumented minors "have no other choice but to flee their countries, where life is an unbelievable nightmare."

"The treatment and mistreatment of Central American refugees is a national and international disgrace," he said.

During fiscal year 2014, from Oct. 1, 2013, to Sept. 30, 2014, 68,641 unaccompanied minors, most of them from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, crossed the southern border into the U.S., according to official statistics.

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