
Democrats and Children Ask to Close US Family Detention Centers

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"While some changes have been made to improve conditions at these centers and reduce the length of detention, the fact is they remain jail-like settings," said California Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard.

"Detention of children is cruel and misguided, and the suffering and negative impact on these young developing minds is unacceptable," she added.

At a Capitol Hill press conference, letters written by over a hundred children from across the country to children spending their Christmas at the centers were presented.

The letters are likely to reach nearly a thousand according to "We Belong Together," the organization behind the letter-writing campaign.

"People seeking asylum, fleeing violence in Central America or fleeing systematic oppression anywhere in the world; we are fighting for the government to treat families and moms and children with respect, to use tax-money as efficiently as possible, and to end the practice of family detention," said Illinois Congressman Luis Guterrez.

Cartizta and Alejandro, mother and son who did not wish to disclose their surnames, were also present at the event and spoke about their experience at one of the detention centers.

"The kids hate to be locked up. My son would ask, 'When can we leave? When can we leave?'" said the immigrant mother.

"My parents are Mexican immigrants who crossed the border for a better future for my sister and me. They are not criminals and nor are those children," Noe, a boy who also wrote a holiday wishes letter to children in detention centers told EFE.

He said he wanted his letter to cheer up children like him detained in the centers.

Earlier this week the U.S. government announced three new centers - two in Texas and one in California - to accommodate undocumented minor immigrants, crossing over unaccompanied from the southern U.S. border.

The Texas centers will have a total capacity of 1,000 beds while the California center will add another 400 to its existing strength.

According to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the country currently has three immigrant detention centers, Berks in Pennsylvania state, and Karnes City and Dilley in Texas.

While Berks, with a capacity of 96, had 76 people at the beginning of August, Karnes city (532) has 193, and Dilley (2,400) houses 1,182 people.
