

**Statement Against Immigration Detention – International  
June 20, 2018**

- The number of people placed in immigration detention around the world has increased alarmingly. Reports suggest that hundreds of thousands of individuals are held in immigration detention or separated from their families every year.
- Studies have repeatedly confirmed the detrimental consequences of immigration detention on the mental health of detainees and their families.
- Immigration detention practices around the world violate international human rights law.

The Trump administration's policy of locking up and separating families at the border exemplifies how immigration detention may be used to wreak suffering and violate human rights for the purpose of deterrence. But the US-Mexico border is not the only place where asylum seekers and other migrants face extreme abuses today. From Europe to Africa to the Middle East to Asia, harmful detention and deterrence practices are leading to severe violations of people's fundamental rights.

**As a matter of principle, individuals should not be placed in immigration detention or separated from their families. If a person poses a danger to him or herself or to others, other legal measures outside the scope of immigration policy should be used to address such situations.**

Immigration detention often violates individuals' fundamental human rights by depriving them of liberty without adequate legal safeguard. It has devastating and lasting effects on the mental health and wellbeing of all who experience it. Studies from around the world have repeatedly confirmed that immigration detainees are at risk of developing symptoms of depression, anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress-disorder. This is particularly harmful to children, who may also have difficulty sleeping, lose their appetite for food and interest in play, and develop variety of physical symptoms. Even brief periods of confinement can have a severe and lasting impact on health and development. Immigration detention may even be fatal.

**There are viable non-coercive measures not involving detention procedures that can be effective in managing immigration cases.** Studies show that authorities can ensure a high rate of compliance with immigration proceedings when individuals are treated with dignity, understand their rights and duties, and receive adequate material support, including case-management and legal services, early and throughout the process. Evidence-informed and community based programs may include enforcement of specific reporting obligations, the use of cash bonds and guarantors, and suitable risk management programs for more challenging cases. They are also significantly more cost-effective than detention. Importantly, these measures allow for more humane and respectful treatment of vulnerable individuals, and facilitate the protection of their mental health, wellbeing, and fundamental rights.

We urge governments around the world to cease the human rights violations of already marginalized and vulnerable individuals.