



New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Working for a World Without Violence.

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NYSCASA Statement on US Immigrant Detention: Close the Camps, Bear Witness, Reunite Families, and End the Violence

The New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA) condemns the violence and dehumanizing conditions faced by adults and children while detained in US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) migrant detention centers under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security.

On July 2, The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of the Investigator General (OIG) released a management alert regarding [dangerous overcrowding and prolonged detention](#) occurring at DHS detention centers, which pose significant risks to the safety and well-being of people incarcerated in these facilities and demonstrate non-compliance with [CBP's Transport, Escort, Detention, and Search \(TEDS\) standards](#). We have also seen reports of [unsanitary living conditions](#), as well as evidence of medical neglect, [including untreated infection, malnutrition, and psychological trauma](#), in CBP facilities housing incarcerated children.

OIG's recommendations to DHS include transferring single adults from CBP to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, arguing that within DHS, "[long-term detention is ICE's responsibility](#)." However, continued incarceration is not a solution to the humanitarian crisis the US government has created. Moreover, the crisis is not limited to CBP.

We have seen reports of [systemic and widespread sexual harassment, abuse, and assault](#) occurring in ICE detention facilities across the nation, with only 2 percent of complaints having been investigated, which demonstrates non-compliance with [DHS Prison Rape Elimination Act \(PREA\) standards](#). In addition, according to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) documents, [thousands of migrant children have experienced sexual abuse while in US government custody under the Office of Refugee Resettlement \(ORR\) since 2015](#). Sexual violence is deeply rooted in oppression and has long been used as a tool for maintaining hierarchies of power, specifically in the context of violence against Black, Indigenous, and Latinx

women and children in what is currently the US.

Central American and [African asylum-seekers](#), particularly women and children, who are apprehended and detained in the US are often [fleeing from domestic violence and sexual violence](#). Once in detention, they face continued violence and abuse, rather than the help and support trauma survivors need. In 2009, the [Tahirih Justice Center](#) reported that detaining victims and survivors of gender-based violence 1) exacerbates symptoms of trauma, stripping them of their privacy and control; 2) leaves survivors with limited access to necessary medical and mental health care; and 3) denies survivors the opportunity to obtain free or low cost legal counsel, significantly decreasing their likelihood of success in applying for relief. Ten years later, these injustices continue for trauma survivors seeking asylum and relief in the US. We risk re-traumatizing migrants and refugees the longer we incarcerate them and allow these conditions to persist.

More than a year ago, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, called for an [immediate halt to family separation](#), a practice he condemned as abuse. Since then, this administration has prioritized criminalization, fear, and punishment over family reunification, at great cost to forcibly separated families.

We thank Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other members of Congress, including Rep. Ayanna Pressley (MA) and Rep. Joaquin Castro (TX), for visiting DHS's CBP detention centers earlier this week and continuing to draw our attention to [patterns of systemic cruelty](#) at these centers. We also thank Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, who, alongside Sen. Kamala Harris (CA) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (MN), recently visited the largest shelter for unaccompanied or separated children in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and is now calling on HHS to [prioritize family reunification and provide adequate resources to ensure the well-being of children](#) in the shelters. We are also grateful to Sen. Warren (MA) for visiting the CBP processing center in McAllen, TX, and the Port Isabel Detention Center, and [describing the conditions she observed in both facilities and what she learned from women incarcerated in Port Isabel](#).

This week, we delivered a letter to Rep. Elise Stefanik, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, and Sen. Chuck Schumer, calling on our elected officials to:

1. Close the CBP migrant detention camps.
2. Limit funding allocated for migrant detention and deportation.
3. Bear witness to the atrocity and reunite families.

We must all bear witness and take action against the violence and dehumanization facing immigrants and refugees seeking a new life in the US free from violence and oppression.

Take action:

- [Call your elected officials: Close the camps!](#)
- [Donate to #FreedomDay \(July 4\) Immigration Bond Funds](#)
- [Sign the petition telling the US House of Representatives to shut down this administration's concentration camps](#)
- [More Ways to Help Migrant Children Detained At The Border](#)

- Support/get involved with these organizations:
 - [New York Immigration Coalition](#)
 - [Columbia County Sanctuary Movement](#)
 - [New Sanctuary Coalition](#)
 - [Make the Road New York](#)
 - [The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services \(RAICES\)](#)
 - [Casa de Esperanza](#)
 - [UndocuBlack Network](#)
 - [United We Dream](#)
 - [Detention Watch Network](#)
 - [Freedom for Immigrants](#)

The New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NYSCASA) is a private, nonprofit coalition of community-based rape crisis programs throughout New York State. Our mission is to end all forms of sexual violence and exploitation while addressing the intersections of oppression and injustice.

For more information about the services offered by NYSCASA's member programs, survivors are encouraged to visit our website: www.nyscasa.org. All survivors of gender-based violence in NY can call the New York State Hotline for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence for free and confidential support: 1-800-942-6906. [Casa de Esperanza](#) also offers a 24-hour bilingual (English/Spanish) hotline: 1-651-772-1611.

Additional Resources:

- [Voices from Detention: Amplifying the Voices of Those Directly Impacted by Immigration Detention](#)
- [Report: Latina Immigrant Women and Children's Well-being and Access to Services After Detention](#)
- [Op-ed: The Treatment of Migrants Likely 'Meets the Definition of a Mass Atrocity'](#)
- [Columbia County Sanctuary Movement: Know Your Rights/Conoce Tus Derechos](#)
- [New York Immigration Coalition: Know Your Rights Community Toolkit](#)