



Galveston-Houston Immigrant  
Representation Project

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**Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation Project (GHIRP)**

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### **Press Release: Government Escalates Targeted Attacks on Immigrant Children and Their Families**

**Galveston-Houston, TX** – The federal government’s comprehensive and unprecedented attacks on immigrant children have reached a new low.

Since the start of the new administration, GHIRP has seen a sweeping effort to identify, target, and deport unaccompanied children and the families who care for them. For instance, the government attempted to eliminate legal representation for children while placing them on “rocket dockets,” forcing toddlers and pre-teens to appear alone in court on severely expedited timelines.

At the same time, enforcement agents have conducted unannounced home visits to unaccompanied children, terrifying them and their caretakers. These actions not only instill fear in the children but also disrupt the daily lives of their families and communities. ICE has even begun arresting parents during school drop-offs, leaving U.S. citizen children without a parent to pick them up or care for them after school.

Through various tactics, children are being intentionally subjected to prolonged detention in an effort to force them to abandon their requests for protection in the United States. Parents, siblings, and relatives who come forward to facilitate a child’s release from custody are now being arrested and detained by ICE. Children, desperate to be reunited with their families, are left in detention for six months to a year despite having a safe home waiting for them.

The emotional toll on children is devastating. Prolonged detention has resulted in profound mental health problems, depression, sadness, and a state of despair caused by isolation and the ongoing uncertainty of their fate. Their suffering is a stark reminder of the human cost of these policies.



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Families of detained children report being coerced, threatened, or pressured into withdrawing their children's legal claims and agreeing to have them returned to the countries they fled, sometimes while being offered financial incentives. Some children have received up to \$5,000 in fines, with only 30 days to pay them, placing extraordinary burdens on already vulnerable minors and families.

There are now widespread rumors that ICE is creating a 24/7 call center to track down unaccompanied children in cooperation with state and local law enforcement. This move would escalate family separations and fear in the community, forcing more families to live in the shadows.

“These policies are cruel and inhumane,” said [Elizabeth “Chiqui” Sanchez Kennedy](#), Executive Director of GHIRP. “They target the most vulnerable among the community, children and youth, and use them as leverage to detain and punish the adults who love them. **At GHIRP, we will continue to speak up, defend our clients, and advocate for dignity, humanity, and the rights of all immigrant children.**”

GHIRP urges policymakers, community leaders, and the public to pay close attention, amplify the stories of impacted immigrant families, and demand accountability. We will continue to collaborate with national partners, litigators, and advocates to challenge these harmful policies and protect children at every stage of their legal process.

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**GHIRP's mission is to build a resilient, diverse community by providing comprehensive representation and holistic legal services to immigrants in need.**

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