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ICE Is Separating Families and Denying Care to Pregnant Women in Violation of Its Own Policies, New Report Finds

Interviews with deportees in Honduras reveal parents separated from their children, including infants, and medical neglect of pregnant women

March 19, 2026 | Asylum, United States

Washington, DC / New York – A new **report** from the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), based on firsthand interviews with recently deported parents and reception center staff in Honduras, documents clear violations of US immigration policy. *What About My Children: Family Separation Among Parents Deported to*

Honduras find policies to protect them they have children their children postpartum of ICE’s own



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“What we documented in Honduras provides concrete evidence to suggest that ICE is not following its own policies to keep families together,” said **Zain Lakhani, WRC’s Director of Migrant Rights and Justice**. “The human cost of this is devastating and confirms what WRC has been tracking since the start of the administration: children left crying for their mothers, toddlers abandoned without warning, parents being deported without being given an opportunity to decide what will happen to their children, and pregnant women denied basic and even life-saving medical care. Congress must take urgent action to protect family unity, including policies and procedures to ensure that parents who have been separated can reunify with their children, or make arrangements for their long-term care.”

“As a physician, I traveled to Honduras and interviewed recently deported mothers within days of their arrival. What I heard was horrifying. PHR has **documented** the severe, lasting harm that family separation inflicts on both parents and children, including post-traumatic stress disorder persisting years after reunification. It is unconscionable that the US government is inflicting these abuses once again on families, even after the **well-documented harms caused by separations** under the first Trump administration’s ‘zero tolerance’ policy,” said **Michele Heisler MD, MPA, Medical Director at PHR and Professor of Internal Medicine and Public Health at University of Michigan**. “We are also seeing pregnant women in immigration detention denied medical care during life-threatening

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Key findings:

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Honduras's main reception center had left children behind in the US. This includes parents who provided written or verbal statements to ICE that they wanted to bring their children with them. One mother, arrested outside a hospital after a medical appointment, had three children with her and three at home; she repeatedly told the arresting officers about the three other children but was ignored. The family is now separated, with reunification profoundly uncertain.

- One father, whose wife had already been detained, was arrested outside his home and begged to go inside and alert his daughter's babysitter. Officers refused. He was deported, and his three-year-old child was left alone with the babysitter who, concerned when he never came home, stayed with the child for 11 days.
- **ICE is detaining pregnant and postpartum women and not providing adequate medical care for pregnant women with life-threatening conditions.** This testimony aligns with reports submitted to WRC's [Pregnancy Detention Tracker](#) documenting mistreatment, inadequate healthcare, insufficient food, and shackling of pregnant and postpartum women in detention.
 - Medical staff at the reception center described a 25-year-old pregnant woman who bled for several days inside a detention facility, received no medical attention despite repeated requests, and arrived in Honduras in emergency condition.

- Another woman, who was pregnant with twins, was arrested outside a hospital and received no medical attention while in custody.

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families carry persistent trauma, meeting clinical criteria for PTSD and major depressive disorder years later.

The report includes WRC and PHR's clear recommendations to the US Congress, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Government of Honduras, including:

- Congress must take immediate steps to end the violation of ICE policies concerning family separations, including by codifying parental interest protections into law and requiring DHS to establish formal processes for reunifying separated parents and children.
- Congress should mandate through the appropriations process that DHS provide regular reports on the information ICE is required to collect under the Detained Parents Directive, including requirements that document whenever ICE arrests a parent and what that parent wants to do with their child[ren] if they are deported.
- Congress should provide humanitarian aid to countries to establish reunification and family tracing programs to help them meet the needs of their returning nationals.
- DHS should ensure that all officers and detention centers comply with ICE Directives and policies designed to protect pregnant, postpartum, and nursing women, including compliance with *ICE Directive 11032.4 Identification and Monitoring of Pregnant,*

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Additional Background: In November 2025, WRC and PHR researchers traveled to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, spending five days at reception centers, including La Lima, the reception center where all deportees first arrive after removal from the US. Over the course of their visit, 854 deportees arrived at La Lima, the primary receiving center. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 29 parents; spoke with dozens of reception center staff, medical workers, attorneys, and government officials; and observed arrivals firsthand.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is a New York-based advocacy organization that uses science and medicine to prevent mass atrocities and severe human rights violations. [Learn more here.](#)

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