



Dear Senator:

As the Steering Committee of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (“NTF”), comprised of national leadership organizations advocating on behalf of sexual and domestic violence victims and women’s rights, we represent hundreds of organizations across the country that are dedicated to ensuring *all* survivors of violence receive the protections they deserve. For this reason, we ask you to add your name to the letter by Senator Leahy’s office urging the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to *end detention of refugee women and their children*. Join your colleagues in making a difference for these women and children.

The majority of the women and children who are in detention are survivors of sexual and domestic violence and trafficking. They are fleeing some of the most violent countries in the world: in 2011, El Salvador had the highest rate of gender-motivated killing of women in the world, followed by Guatemala (third highest) and Honduras (sixth highest).

Detention of adult and child survivors of sexual and domestic violence is re-traumatizing in and of itself. The intense restrictions and disciplinary rules, as well as verbal and sexual abuse inside the facilities, combined with the arbitrary, indefinite, and prolonged nature of the detention, cause lasting physical and psychological problems, including serious symptoms of re-traumatization for survivors of violence.

The recent attempted suicide in the facility located in Dilley, Texas, is but one example of the injurious impact of detention on survivors. It has been nearly impossible for traumatized victims of violence to obtain competent, linguistically appropriate, and culturally relevant mental health services, which they need in order to heal from trauma and also to meaningfully access the legal process to which they are entitled.

It has been almost a year since the Administration began detaining large numbers of refugee women and their children in prison-like facilities, and now, the writing is on the wall: detention of mothers and their children must stop.

It is critical that we ensure that survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault have meaningful opportunities to recover from trauma and pursue legal protections. This is a matter of life or death for many of the detained adult and child survivors currently being held in still expanding family detention facilities. We urge you take steps to end family detention, and to please start by signing the letter to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that they are not further re-traumatized or denied due process in family detention. Please do not hesitate to contact Andrea Carcamo at the National Latin@ Network with any questions or concerns at acarcamo@casadeesperanza.org or 703.942.5582 or Grace Huang at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence at grace@wscadv.org or (206) 389-2515 ext. 209.

Sincerely,

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence