

Dear President Obama:

As religious leaders, communions, and faith-based organizations, we urge you to listen to the recommendations of the Department of Homeland Security Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers. These recommendations were presented at its final meeting on October 7, 2016 and call for an immediate end to the practice of detaining Central American children and families seeking asylum in the United States.

While we come from diverse religious traditions, we share common values and teachings calling us to welcome the stranger and to show mercy and kindness, particularly to those most vulnerable. Surely, the children, youth, women, and men who are fleeing rape, murder, extortion, gang recruitment, and other physical and emotional horrors in countries internationally condemned for their impunity to violence deserve our most thoughtful care.

The Committee's report recognizes that simply improving detention center conditions to meet best practice standards is not a sufficient fix for the trauma and re-traumatization resulting from detention of any length of time.

In addition to being inhumane, detaining parents and children is unnecessary. According to the report, these families pose an extremely low flight risk and no harm to local host communities. Moreover, detention is extremely expensive for the U.S. government while other effective, community-based, low-cost alternatives are immediately available.

DHS's own experts make this case. There is no reason to wait any longer. We see this as a matter of conscience as well as good policy and call upon you to immediately institute a community-based asylum-seeking process for families as well as unaccompanied children.

Signed,

Faith/Religious Leaders (organization only for identification purposes)
Communion and organizational endorsements: