

# URGENT ACTION

## STOP SEPARATION OF FAMILY SEEKING SAFETY

On 17 March, US immigration authorities detained Alberto, the father of a Venezuelan family of 4, separating him from his wife and two children. Despite the family having pending asylum applications, he was charged with “illegal” entry to the United States, more than two years after the family’s arrival at the southern US border. A federal judge ordered him released from jail on 20 March, but he was detained by immigration authorities on 27 March after complying with a letter he received to report to the immigration office. We call on the Trump administration to immediately release him and cease the cruel practice of family separation.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Todd Lyons**  
**Acting Director Immigration and Customs Enforcement**  
500 12th St SW  
Washington, DC 20536, USA  
Email: [Todd.M.Lyons@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:Todd.M.Lyons@ice.dhs.gov)

Dear Mr. Lyons,

*I urge you to immediately release Alberto (A# 246148371) back to his wife and two children. On 27 March 2025, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Chantilly, VA, USA, unlawfully detained and separated him from his family, despite having a pending asylum claim, after he was ordered released by a federal judge on charges of “illegal” entry to the United States on 20 March 2025. The arrest happened as he was complying with his immigration requirements, as he has done since arriving to the United States.*

*This is one of the first times that the United States has used 8 U.S.C. 1325, the provision of immigration law that was the basis for the Trump administration’s family separation policy in its first term, to target a family that has been in the United States for years, rather than recent arrivals at the US-Mexico border. Family separation was illegal then, and it is still illegal now.*

*This is a blatant and outrageous subversion of the law being used to target immigrants and separate families that have already built lives in the United States. Everyone has the right to seek asylum. People should be given prompt access to fair and efficient asylum procedures outside of detention, and under international refugee law, cannot be penalized due to irregular entry into the country where they are seeking protection. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has called on States to ensure that Venezuelans are not deported, expelled or forced to return to Venezuela.*

*A father was ripped away from his wife and children, and thrust into a system that inflicts violence and prolongs their suffering. Separating families causes long lasting trauma, particularly in children, can amount to torture, and is a flagrant breach of their human rights.*

***I urge you to immediately change course and release Alberto back to his family, and end the practice of family separation, family detention, mass detention and deportations.***

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In recent weeks, President Trump has unleashed a series of actions that dehumanize, criminalize, and cause real suffering to immigrants and people seeking safety. Across the country, the Trump administration continues to implement increasingly cruel and shocking tactics to strike fear in communities, separate and detain families, and target activists and beloved community members.

Alberto, his wife and their two children, aged 17 and 5, fled Venezuela to seek safety, security and a new life in the United States. They entered the US in 2022 through Texas. The entire family has pending asylum applications.

Alberto had previously been arrested on his way to work on 17 March 2025. He was released on 20 March, pending a court hearing scheduled in Texas. He is currently being detained at the Farmville Detention Center in Virginia.

The Trump administration has recently begun using 8 U.S.C. 1325, the provision of immigration law that was the basis for the Trump administration's family separation policy in its first term, to target individuals and families that have been in the United States for years, rather than recent arrivals at the US-Mexico border. Judges out of the Western District of Texas have issued numerous warrants targeting people who have been in the U.S. for years including parents of young children, people who have already been granted relief from deportation, and people who have been compliant with all of their immigration responsibilities.

All individuals have the universal human right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution and serious human rights violations. All individuals also have the right not to be returned to places where their life or freedom may be endangered or where they would be at risk of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, regardless of their migration status. This principle, known as *non-refoulement*, is a protection under customary international, human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law, and requires states to refrain from returning, removing or transferring anyone in any manner whatsoever to their countries of origin or any other location where there are substantial grounds to believe they would be at risk of serious human rights abuses. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has [called](#) on States to ensure that Venezuelans are not deported, expelled or forced to return to Venezuela. Amnesty International has [called](#) for an absolute ban on all deportations of individuals to Venezuela given that the country is experiencing a situation of massive human rights violations.

The 1951 Refugee Convention recognizes that the seeking of asylum can require refugees to breach immigration rules and indicates that people seeking safety should not be subject to specific requirements or suffer penalties or discrimination for this reason. States cannot exclude an individual from refugee status until their claim has been adequately evaluated and individuals cannot be penalized or excluded from refugee status based on their manner of entry into the country in which they are seeking international protection.

Moreover, family separation causes long lasting trauma, particularly in children and is a flagrant breach of their human rights. Amnesty International has previously [determined](#) that immigration policies of separating families can amount to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment because they cause severe mental suffering.

The Trump administration must immediately change course and release Alberto back to his family, and end the practice of family separation, family detention, and mass detention and deportations.

### **PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English

You can also write in your own language.

### **PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 27 June 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Alberto (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** N/A