



Talking Points: Unaccompanied Children in the United States

The Children

- Unaccompanied children—children under age 18 who come to the United States without a parent or legal guardian—have been coming to the United States in increasing numbers since 2011. They range in age from toddlers to teenagers.
 - In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016¹ a total of 59,692 unaccompanied children arrived in the U.S., according to Customs and Border Protection, making it the second highest annual total of child arrivals. This number is 33 percent higher than FY 2015 (39,970) and 13 percent lower than FY 2014 (68,541), the year of the historic surge.
- The large majority are from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala and are fleeing growing narco- and gang violence and human trafficking in their countries from which their governments cannot or will not protect them.
- Gangs control entire areas of these countries and target children, threatening and attacking them to force them to join their gangs. Girls are forced to become gang members’ “girlfriends” and are often raped if they refuse.
- Other children are fleeing sexual and gender-based violence, which includes rape, sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and forced or early marriage. A number have been abandoned or been trafficked for sex or labor.

The Problem

- The countries in the Northern Triangle of Central America—El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala—are among the most violent in the world.
- El Salvador unseated Honduras as the most murderous country in the world in early 2016 with about 108 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015.
- Honduras has a murder rate of about 57 murders per 100,000 inhabitants.
- El Salvador and Guatemala have the world’s highest murder rates among children and adolescents.
- More than half of those killed in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala in 2015 were under 30 years of age.
- El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have among the highest female murder rates in the world.

¹ October 2015 – September 2016.



The Need

- About 60 percent of unaccompanied children in the United States—tens of thousands of children—do not have lawyers in immigration court.
- Unaccompanied children with attorneys are five times more likely to gain U.S. protection, while only one in ten unaccompanied children without attorneys win their cases.
- Without fair access to due process, the United States risks sending children back to grave harm where their well-being, and even their lives, may be in danger.

KIND

- KIND finds pro bono attorneys for unaccompanied children in deportation proceedings. KIND has more than 400 law firm, corporate, law school, and bar association partners which have agreed to represent children referred to KIND.
- KIND trains and mentors its pro bono attorneys. No immigration experience is necessary.
- KIND has trained more than 17,000 attorneys and been referred more than 14,000 children since it opened its doors in 2009.
- For every dollar of donor support, KIND leverages \$5 in pro bono services.
- KIND helps children returning to Guatemala and Honduras do so safely and provides opportunities for these children to continue their education and receive skills training and counseling, among other social services. These services provide them with an alternative to re-migration.
- KIND has partnered with Arnold & Porter LLP to provide pro bono legal services to children in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala who have applied for the U.S. Central American Minors (CAM) program, which allows children with parents in lawful status in the United States to apply for refugee protection in their home country.
- KIND is conducting an assessment of the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) among immigrant and refugee children from Central America throughout their journeys to better understand the systems in place to protect migrant children affected by SGBV, as well as gaps in protection. The goal of the assessment, which will be released in mid-2017, is to increase understanding of this little-known issue and help inform the creation of effective programming to help child survivors.
- KIND also advocates to change law, policy, and practice to improve the protection of unaccompanied children in the United States, and is working to improve the protection of child migrants throughout Central America and Mexico.



The Solution

- Donate to support the protection of unaccompanied children.
- Volunteer with KIND—both lawyers and non-lawyers are welcome.
- Spread the word to increase understanding of and compassion for these children.
- Urge your members of Congress to co-sponsor the *Fair Day in Court for Kids Act* and the *Secure the Northern Triangle Act*.
- Urge your members of Congress to support federal funding for legal services for unaccompanied children and U.S. foreign aid to Central America to address the root causes of the extreme violence.

For more information, visit www.supportkind.org - Get Involved, or email KIND at info@supportkind.org.