



## **Explainer: The 545 missing separated parents of immigrant and refugee children**

### ***What does it mean that 545 parents of children who were forcibly separated can't be found?***

- A Steering Committee charged by a federal court to find the parents forcibly separated by the Trump Administration has not been able to reach 545 of the thousands of parents who were separated from their children in 2017 and 2018.
- The Steering Committee, which includes KIND, ACLU, Women's Refugee Commission, and Justice in Motion, along with the law firm Paul Weiss, has not been able to get in touch with all parents because the contact info provided by the government to the Steering Committee was old—provided about two years after the separations occurred—and significantly incomplete.
- The information was so inadequate because the government made no effort to track and reunite children who were separated from their parents in 2017 and early 2018. Unlike the class of parents separated during the Zero Tolerance policy, there was no court order in place mandating the reunification of these families.
- The Steering Committee has been trying to reach these parents, who are believed to be located both in Central American and in the United States, by widely sharing [toll-free numbers that parents can call](#) for assistance.

### ***Is KIND serving children whose parents are “missing?”***

- KIND is not currently serving any child whose parents are “missing.”
- However, many of the children we serve are still separated from their parents because their parents were deported after separation. These children have not seen their parents in 2-3 years.

### ***Why is this still so important two years after the family separation crisis?***

- The fact that hundreds of parents cannot be found through this effort shows once again how appalling the original separations were—the government separated over 1,000 families before the official announcement of the Zero Tolerance policy in 2018, and it has taken enormous effort simply to try to account for these families.
- This news comes in the face of now widespread evidence that a number of White House and government officials pushed for this cruel policy to be tested in 2017 despite knowing the risks, the absence of effective tracking mechanisms, and just how young many of these children were; they still pushed forward with the pilot and then later the horrific Zero Tolerance policy.<sup>1</sup>
- With all the focus on finding parents, it is important to remember the damage that was intentionally inflicted by the government on children and parents in the name of “deterrence.” Thousands are still suffering greatly as we see among the separated children KIND serves. The separation inflicted permanent trauma on these children. We broke these families apart. We should be asking, how will we make them whole?

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g.: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/trump-cabinet-officials-voted-2018-white-house-meeting-separate-migrant-n1237416>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/us/politics/family-separation-border-immigration-jeff-sessions-rod-rosenstein.html>