

Children separated at border, suffering alarming and prolonged effects: UN rights experts

Separating children from their undocumented parents is a traumatic violation of their rights, UN independent experts said on Friday.

The group of experts said in a statement that the treatment of migrants as criminals, provokes intolerance and xenophobia, in addition to posing a danger to their well-being.

Criminalizing irregular migrants and addressing irregular migration through harsh border control measures “is disproportionate to migration governance, contributes to rising intolerance and xenophobia, and the social exclusion of migrants,” said Chair of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers ([CMW](#)), Ahmadou Tall.

Ms. Renate Winter, who chairs the Committee of the Rights of the Child ([CRC](#)), elaborated on the repercussions for children who are separated from their parents, explaining there are “long-lasting effects” on their health.

She emphasized that for migrants, trauma and stress often begin in their countries of origin, and this is further exacerbated when governments inhumanely separate families.

Children are left vulnerable without their parents, risking exposure to gender-based violence and leaving young girls to fall prey to serious human rights violations, said Ms. Dalia Leinarte, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#)).

The experts called on UN [Member States](#) to fulfill the human rights of all persons, regardless of immigration status, expressing concern for those in detention who sometimes face violence, overcrowding, poor sanitary facilities and inadequate mental and physical care.

Ms. Winters added that the treatment of children should be based first and foremost on their identity, regardless of migration status or nationality.

States should fully cooperate to address the root causes of irregular migration, and work to make accessible, safe migration paths more available, the experts said.

They concluded that with the coming into force of the [Global Compact on Migration](#), which seeks to investigate and address migration concerns, States will benefit from hearing the voices of migrants themselves to ensure their full respect and protection.