

AMENA-Psy Denounces Detention and Separation of Families at Border

July 6, 2018

The American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy) opposes the federal [“zero tolerance” policies](#) that have led to detention and separation of families fleeing to the U.S. from situations of extreme hardship.

Although the policy of actively separating families has reportedly ceased following a June 20, 2018 presidential [Executive Order](#), over 2,300 children face logistical, legal, and financial obstacles towards reunification with their parents. The revised policy of detaining families continues to violate human rights and time limits on detentions of minors. We are moreover concerned about “zero tolerance” policies applied to children and asylum seekers who were previously extended national and international legal protections.

The administration’s policy of family separation and indefinite family detention threatens the physical and mental health of children and their caregivers, and compounds the stress that led the families to have to leave their home countries. The traumatic experiences can be further exacerbated by [pervasive abuse and neglect of unaccompanied minors in custody](#) of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, as documented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Conditions in detention facilities are further traumatizing for children and their caregivers.

We are deeply concerned about the psychological distress that these policies are causing to children and their caregivers. [Traumatic separation](#) occurs when children are separated suddenly, unexpectedly, and for prolonged periods of time from their caregivers. This can result in posttraumatic stress responses, impediments to development, and other mental health concerns among children. [Childhood trauma](#) has deleterious impacts on children’s cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, among others. The longer families remain separated or under traumatic conditions, the worse the long-lasting impact on children’s wellbeing.

Children thrive in community settings under the care of those who love them. We demand justice for these families, and echo the voices of leading healthcare professional organizations that have articulated the serious negative repercussion of such policies: [American Psychological Association](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and the [American Medical Association](#). We call upon the White House Administration to stop the indefinite detention of migrant families and immediately intensify efforts to reunite separated families.

About [AMENA-Psy](#)

*The American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation dedicated to the development of Arab/MENA psychologists and psychological research and interventions in North America. The organization welcomes anyone interested in American Arab/MENA psychological issues. www.amenapsy.org
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