



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DHS is “Criminalizing Basic Acts of Compassion Toward Children” with Proposed ‘Zero Tolerance’ Policy at the Border**

**Chicago—April 27, 2018**—Yesterday, the Washington Post [reported](#) on a “zero tolerance” measure being proposed by officials at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). If adopted, families crossing the southern border without authorization would be automatically subject to detention and prosecution, a move that could separate thousands of young children from their parents. Oscar Chacón, executive director of Alianza Americas, issued the following statement in reaction to the proposal:

*“This short-sighted, cruel policy proposal criminalizes the most basic act of compassion and love: protecting one’s children from harm.*

*Migrant families crossing our southern border—the data show that most of them are Central Americans—are doing so out of sheer desperation. They have decided that making a terrifying journey across a perilous corridor where theft, rape, and violence are prevalent is preferable to staying in their home countries. People fleeing these conditions deserve support and compassion from a nation that purports to offer refuge to the world’s most vulnerable, not further trauma and separation.*

*DHS has said that this new “zero tolerance” policy will not apply to asylum seekers, people who present themselves to authorities at the border to seek protections. The reality is that most Central American families should indeed be protected and welcomed to our country under internationally recognized humanitarian laws. Yet anti-immigrant rhetoric, outdated migration policies, and horrific backlogs in our court system keep most families and children from accessing these basic protections.*

*What’s more, even the few who achieve asylum status risk separation and cruelty at the hands of our immigration system: Numerous stories—such as the [recent case](#) of a seven-year-old Congolese asylee who was separated from her mother for months—demonstrate that DHS does not make good on its promises. The justifiable fear generated by our government’s inconsistent application of its own rules will dissuade those who qualify for humanitarian protections to seek them.*

*A more effective path for DHS would be to look past the US border to address the stark in-country realities—poverty and inequality, escalating violence, and deep-seated impunity—that are driving migration from the region. Yet the Trump administration is dismantling the fragile network that previously existed to support Central American nations. Last year, the administration abruptly ended the Central American Minor program—known as CAM—which allowed youth to apply for asylum status from their home countries. It has cancelled Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador and Nicaragua, and will likely terminate the program for Honduras next month, decisions which threaten to thrust these nations into chaos as they struggle to reintegrate hundreds of thousands of returnees. The administration has also attempted to slash aid to the region and has lent it support—via complicity or complacency—to recent developments that threaten democracy in the region, including fraudulent elections in Honduras and state-backed violence against protestors. Recent events in Nicaragua, are just the latest example of this pattern.*

*Alianza Americas unequivocally denounces the proposed “zero tolerance” policy, and asks for Americans to act on our shared values of humanity and decency, calling for our government to support*

*migrant families instead of criminalizing them. Children fleeing violence belong with their parents, not in a detention facility.”*

**Alianza Americas** is a network of 50 immigrant-led organizations representing more than 100,000 families across the United States. It is the only US-based organization rooted in Latino and Caribbean immigrant communities that works transnationally to create an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable way of life. Learn more at [alianzaamericas.org](http://alianzaamericas.org).

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