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| |  | | --- | | Trump’s Refugee Ban Will Impact Thousands of Children Fleeing Violence in Central America | |

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| |  | | --- | | Washington, D.C.—The Trump administration’s revised executive order “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” suspends refugee resettlement programs for 120 days and temporarily bans the entry of citizens from six countries for 90 days.   **“These measures further call into question the United States’ longstanding commitment to refugees and asylum seekers,”** said [Maureen Meyer](http://wola.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=2023f1ca1b&e=7e55782f82), Senior Associate for Migrant Rights. **“This temporary ban will endanger the lives of many in the Middle East, in Africa, in Asia, and also in Central America.”**  The order will halt the Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole Program, set up in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to allow children who have a parent legally present in the United States to apply for U.S. refugee status or parole. The purpose of the program is to provide protection to children who are fleeing their country and taking the dangerous journey north as a result of [endemic levels of violence in Central America](http://wola.us5.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=dcec3f5108&e=7e55782f82). Children and young adults are particularly vulnerable to death threats, as local gangs often try to forcibly recruit them, extort them, or in the case of girls, pressure them into relationships with gang members ([see this short video](http://wola.us5.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=0e801c6995&e=7e55782f82)[series](http://wola.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=2380f99496&e=7e55782f82) featuring young girls and boys who fled Central America because of threats to their lives).  **“Central American children, many whose lives are in danger, will be forced to wait additional months for their refugee claims to be processed,”** said Meyer. **“Given the high levels of violence and persecution in Central America, this suspension will endanger the lives of many boys and girls.”**  Overall, the number of migrants arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border has dropped significantly, to [near its lowest level since the early 1970s](http://wola.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=7b2b3a7f0f&e=7e55782f82). Migrants apprehended at the border now increasingly include Central American unaccompanied children and families, who are more motivated by fear of violence in their home countries than by hope of economic opportunity. In the first four months of fiscal year 2017, U.S. agents have [apprehended](http://wola.us5.list-manage.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=5641aeef3d&e=7e55782f82) at the border over 21,000 unaccompanied children from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. As of December 2016 there were over 10,500 applications for the CAM program and approximately half of these were for refugee status.    While limited in scope, the program has offered qualifying children the chance to seek safety and protection in the United States. The Department of State should use the discretion granted in the executive order to continue to process claims and give qualifying at-risk children the ability to enter the United States to be with their parents without delay.  **“With the suspension of the refugee program, many children in Central America will now have to decide between two terrible scenarios: stay and risk their life, or make the dangerous journey through Mexico in an attempt to seek safety,”**said Meyer.  For further information, see WOLA’s “[Beyond the Wall: Migration, Rights, and Border Security](http://wola.us5.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=28bd3dd463a2079bdde8ce5f2&id=c7b4757570&e=7e55782f82)” series, which addresses the impact of Trump administration policies with fact-based analysis, alternatives, and advocacy strategies. | |

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