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World Relief Argues Detaining Children Should Stay Off the Table

Baltimore, MD, (March 17, 2023) – World Relief is troubled by recent [reports](#) indicating that the Biden administration is considering the reinstatement of migrant detention policies utilized by previous administrations. Restoring these policies would allow the government to temporarily hold immigrant families – including young children – in jail-like facilities upon their arrival to the United States while they await a court hearing. As a Christian humanitarian organization, we remain steadfast in our opposition to inhumane policies that harm children, separate families, and create additional hardship for those fleeing violence and persecution.

“Families who have endured a dangerous journey to the U.S. border in order to seek asylum, seeking to avail themselves of protections offered under U.S. law to those who can demonstrate a credible fear of persecution, should not be held in jail-like detention facilities. Frankly, children *never* belong in such conditions,” **said Aerlande Wontamo, Senior Vice President of US Programs at World Relief.** “As Christians who believe each of these children and their parents are made in God’s image with inherent dignity, we hope and pray that reports that the Biden administration is considering reviving this process are inaccurate or at least that the broad opposition to such policies leads them to ultimately reject policies that would revive the practice of detaining children.”

World Relief calls on President Biden to fulfill [his promise](#) to “secure our border, while ensuring the dignity of migrants and upholding their legal right to seek asylum” by rejecting family detention policies and, instead, investing in more cost-efficient and humane alternatives.

“Among the many policy changes needed to ensure a more orderly asylum system and a more secure border, one change that the Biden administration ought *not* to consider is a revival of the unjust practice of detaining children in jail-like facilities. While not every family that arrives at the U.S.-Mexico border will qualify for asylum, it’s vital that each is afforded due process to present their case and that we treat everyone – and especially children, given their unique vulnerabilities – humanely,” **said Matthew Soerens, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy at World Relief.**

“There is [ample evidence](#) that families who are placed into alternative detention programs will show up for their immigration court hearings in the vast majority of cases, and while we need Congress to invest in significantly increasing asylum adjudication capacity and legal representation for asylum-seeking families, detaining children while they wait for hearings should be off the table.”

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About World Relief

[World Relief](#) is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world's greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we've partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.