

Published: Tuesday, 02 September 2025 14:35

Written by: Liliana Bolaños

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## Children's rights cannot be ignored



This weekend, the Trump Administration attempted a middle-of-the-night operation to secretly deport dozens of Guatemalan children by placing them on planes without due process or adequate notice to their families. [This operation was part of a much larger plan by the administration to deport as many as 600 Guatemalan children currently in federal custody.](#) Planes were on the runway, preparing to fly the children to Guatemala, [when a federal judge intervened to halt this reckless and unlawful action.](#)

### **Voices for Utah Children condemns this cruelty in the strongest terms.**

Children, especially those who arrive in the United States alone, are entitled to protection, safety, and the right to make their case before a court. These children would not have fled their home country had it not been necessary in the first place. With the support of a legal advocate, they deserve the chance to explain to a judge why they fled and why returning would put them in danger. **Stripping them of these basic rights violates U.S. law, international human rights standards, and our shared moral responsibility to safeguard the most vulnerable.**

These rushed deportations would have placed these children at risk of abuse, neglect, and violence. They also tear at the fabric of our communities, where the

# Statement on the Attempted Deportation of Unaccompanied Guatemalan M

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denial of due process for some undermines justice for all. **When children's rights are disregarded, everyone's rights are weakened.**

Utah has long prided itself on values of family, fairness, and compassion. Those values should lead us to protect children, not subject them to fear and uncertainty at the hands of political agendas. [In Utah, 197 unaccompanied minors have been released to sponsors in the state of Utah in 2025 alone.](#) We call on the administration to immediately cease any further attempts to bypass the law and harm children. Instead, **our nation must uphold due process, invest in humane and orderly systems of care, and reaffirm our commitment to children's well-being above all.**

**We also applaud the courageous advocacy groups and dedicated attorneys,** including the [National Immigration Law Center](#), the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, the National Center for Youth Law, the Acacia Center for Justice, and the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project, [who stepped in at a moment's notice to defend these children and uphold their legal rights.](#) Their swift action prevented a grave injustice and exemplifies the best of our nation's values: justice, compassion, and the belief that every child deserves to be heard and protected.

**Voices for Utah Children will continue to stand alongside immigrant children and families in the fight for justice, dignity, and the protections every child deserves.**

The following statement can be attributed to Liliana E. Bolanos, Policy Analyst at Voices for Utah Children