

Report reveals inhumane conditions of refugees in U.S. detention centers



New York, May 2 (RHC)-- A new report published by a number of human rights groups has shed light on the “inhumane” conditions in a growing number of refugee detention centers in the United States under President Donald Trump.

The report, dubbed “Justice-Free Zones: U.S. Immigration Detention Under the Trump Administration,” was published by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC), according to an HRW report.

The study gathered data from five detention centers in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Arizona, along with interviews from 120 detainees and government documents. The study reached three key findings regarding the condition of detainees, their access to legal counsel, and the growth of the immigrant detention system since Trump’s term began in 2017.

Regarding the conditions of the detainees, the study concluded that inmates were held under “inhumane” circumstances with “paltry” access to medical care.

The study found that, since 2017, 39 adults had died resulting from substandard care provided while in custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Multiple people interviewed at one Louisiana facility said that they had no access to soap for bathing or cleaning for their cells or bathrooms.

The study also demonstrated that detainees in centers opened under the Trump administration had limited access to legal counseling. Interviews also said immigration officers sought to complicate matters for the detainees.

The research also noted that the “detention machine” had “exploded” under the Trump administration, with billions of dollars being generated for the “private operators” of the facilities.

The study highlighted that 40 new detention centers had been opened since 2017, with as much as 81 percent of detained people being held in detention centers operated by private companies as of January 2020.

Under the Trump administration, Washington has stepped up efforts to curb illegal immigration into the US, with ICE arresting and deporting tens of thousands of refugees from the country.

Many, however, have questioned Trump’s immigration policy for its disregard for human rights and its handling of the refugees. “The Trump administration and its callous indifference to immigrants’ rights and their humanity have allowed already bad conditions in the detention system to deteriorate even further,” said Grace Meng, a senior researcher at the HRW.

Tara Tidwell Cullen, the communications director of the NIJC, also expressed concern about the “unprecedented” growth of the detention of undocumented refugees and asylum seekers. “Since Donald Trump took office, this problem has reached unprecedented levels. We hope this report sends alarm bells,” she said.

Eunice Cho, a senior staff attorney at the ACLU’s National Prison Project, said the project was conducted before the deadly COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

“Even before this crisis, detained people were unable to get basic care, they were held in a culture of fear, without any clear way to get out of detention,” she said. “In a global pandemic, these conditions — overcrowding, lack of access to medical care, staff who don’t speak Spanish, etc. — become even more deadly,” Eunice added.

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