

First, this Administration did not create a policy of separating families at the border.

We have a statutory responsibility that we take seriously to protect alien children from human smuggling, trafficking, and other criminal actions, while enforcing our immigration laws.

We have a long existing policy – multiple administrations have followed – that outline when we may take action to protect children.

We will separate those who claim to be parent and child if we cannot determine a familial or custodial relationship. For example, if there is no documentation to confirm the claimed relationship between an adult and child.

We do so if the parent is a national security, public or safety risk, including where there are criminal charges at issue, and it may not be appropriate to maintain the family in detention together.

We also separate a parent and child if the adult is suspected of human trafficking. There have been cases where minors have been used and trafficked by unrelated adults in an effort to avoid detention.

And separation can occur when the parent is charged with human smuggling. Under those circumstances, we would detain the parent in an appropriate, secure detection facility, separate from the child.

What has changed is we no longer exempt entire classes of people who break the law. Everyone is subject to prosecution.

When DHS refers a case against a parent or legal guardian for criminal prosecution, the parent or legal guardian will be placed into U.S. Marshals Service custody for pre-trial detention pursuant to an order by a federal judge and any accompanying child will be transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services and will be reclassified as an Unaccompanied Alien Child.

That is in accordance with the TVPRA—a law that was passed by Congress—and a following court order – neither are actions of the Trump Administration.

And let's be clear – if an American were to commit a crime anywhere in the United States, they would go to jail and be separated from their family. This is not a controversial ideal.

Second, children in DHS and HHS custody are being well taken care of.

The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement provides meals, medical care and educational services to these children. They are provided temporary shelter, and HHS works hard to find a parent, relative, or foster home to care for these children.

Parents can still communicate with their children through phone calls and video conferencing.

And a parent who is released from custody can be a sponsor and ask HHS to release the child back into their care.

Further, these minors can still apply for asylum and other protections under U.S. immigration law if eligible.

We take allegation of mistreatment seriously. We investigate and we hold those accountable. We have some of the highest detention standards in the country. Claiming these children and their parents are treated inhumanely is ridiculous, and completely disrespects the hardworking men and women at the Office of Refugee Resettlement.