

into powerful data.

the definitive global data and intelligence offering.

LIVE

Iran war

Inflation report

Bam Adebayo

Illinois and Indiana weather

Maxx Crosby trade

people were killed or disappeared during that period.

Activists held a demonstration

military's rule 1964 to 1985 could be buried in Sao Paulo.

AP Intelligence

DISCOVER MORE >

Judge orders return of 3 deported families protected by family separation settlement



Migrant families waded through shallow waters toward Roma, Texas, March 24, 2021. (AP Photo/Dario L. Read More

BY ELLIOT SPAGAT

Updated 6:57 AM GMT+2, February 7, 2026

[Leer en español](#)

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A judge says the federal government must return three families hurt by the first Trump administration's policy of separating parents from the children at the border, saying their deportations in recent months relied on "lies, deception and coercion."

The order, issued Thursday, found the deported families should have been allowed to remain in the United States [under terms of a legal settlement](#) over the Trump administration's separation of about 6,000 children from their parents at the border in 2018. Each mother had permission to remain in the U.S. until 2027 under humanitarian parole.

U.S. District Judge Dana Sabraw in San Diego said the administration also had to pay for their return travel costs.

One woman and her three children, including a 6-year-old U.S. citizen, were deported to Honduras in July after being ordered to check in with ICE at least 11 times over two months, which, she said, caused her to lose her job.

ADVERTISEMENT

“How can I find AP’s **best content**?”

AP Newsroom

Reimagined for you

Sabraw rejected the government’s argument that the family left the U.S. voluntarily. The woman said ICE officers visited her home and asked her sign a document agreeing to leave but she refused.

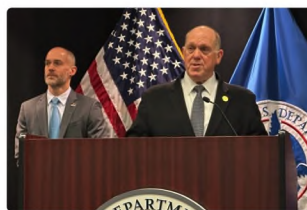
RELATED STORIES



Judge says US must help bring back some of the Venezuelans deported to notorious prison



Masks emerge as symbol of Trump's ICE crackdown and a flashpoint in Congress



Border czar says Minnesota immigration crackdown is over, after angry protests and 2 fatal shootings

“This did not make any difference to these officers. They took me and my children to a motel and removed my ankle monitor. They detained us for three days and then removed us to Honduras,” the woman said in court documents.

The other two families, identified only by their initials, bore similarities.

“Each of the removals was unlawful, and absent the removals, these families would still be in the United States and have access to the benefits and resources they are entitled to,” wrote Sabraw, who was appointed by President George W. Bush.

Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union who represents the families, welcomed the decision.

“The Trump administration has never acknowledged the illegality or gratuitous cruelty of the initial family separation policy and now has started re-deporting and re-separating these same families. The Court put its foot down and not only ordered the families return but did so at government expense,” he said.

ADVERTISEMENT

The Homeland Security and Justice departments did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment Friday.

[Under a “zero-tolerance” policy](#), parents were separated from their children to be criminally prosecuted when crossing the border illegally. Sabraw ordered an end to the separations in June 2018, days after Trump halted them on his own amid intense international backlash. The settlement prohibits such a policy until 2031.

Conversation



Join the conversation

ALL COMMENTS 20

NEWEST ▾



Jdhoward19081 · FEBRUARY 8, 2026

Does anyone remember why this agreement was made? Both Biden and Mayorkas wanted to give them \$450,000. Biden and the Democrats created this mess. EDITED

REPLY 0 1



Lisa59 · FEBRUARY 8, 2026

Judges should not infer with the federal government the president has the right over immigration just like Biden when he allowed 20 million illegals into the US

REPLY 1 REPLY 0 3