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March 20, 2018

Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
800 K Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen,

A March 4th editorial in the *Washington Post* describes how a seven-year-old Congolese child known only as S.S. was forcibly ripped from her mother's arms and taken to a separate room where her mother was able to hear her calling out "mommy, don't let them take me." All of this occurred despite the fact that immigration officials reached a preliminary finding that the mother had a credible fear of harm if she were returned to Congo and that she stood a fair chance of ultimately being granted asylum. Such forced separation is fundamentally cruel and violates the consensus from previous presidents of both parties that it is fundamentally inhumane to separate parents from their children during immigration proceedings.

Yet, S.S. is not alone. According to data compiled by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, there have been at least 53 incidents of forced family separation in the last nine months. Most of these cases involved families escaping the atrocities currently taking place in Central America. Other immigration groups report similar incidents. Despite the clear data demonstrating a pattern of separation, your spokesperson stated that the department does not currently have a policy concerning the separating of asylum-seeking parents from their children.

Faced with this inconsistency, we ask that you reply as soon as possible to the following questions:

1. What policies, rules, or procedures govern the separation of minor children from immigrant parents who are asylum seekers?
2. What meetings have been held at the secretary or undersecretary level to discuss such proceedings and what was the outcome of such meetings?
3. To the extent that no policy, rule, or procedure exists dictating such cruel and inhumane treatment, why is it nonetheless occurring in a systemic manner?

4. What review of such actions are you conducting or do you plan on conducting to ensure that such a policy, rule, or procedure is not put in place?
5. What disciplinary action do you or your subordinates plan to take to punish agency officials who separate minors from their asylum-seeking parents?

We appreciate your full and candid answers to these questions as they will help us perform our constitutional duty of ensuring that the executive branch of government is checked in its official actions.

To follow up on this request, please contact Harry Baumgarten on Representative Yvette Clarke's staff at Harry.baumgarten@mail.house.gov or by phone at (202) 225-6231.


Sincerely,



Cedric Richmond
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus



Yvette D. Clarke
Chair, CBC Immigration Working Group



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member, House Homeland Security Committee


EMANUEL CLEAVER, II
Member of Congress


MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress

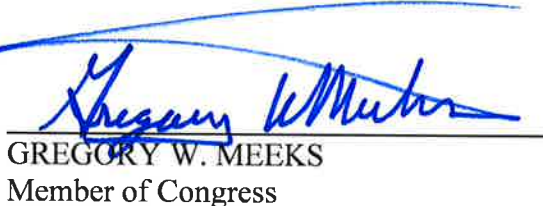

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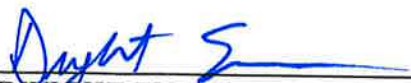

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