



## INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AT THE U.S. BORDER

**RESOLUTION** Year: 2014

WHEREAS, the current influx of children at the U.S. border is an international humanitarian crisis in desperate need of resolution; and

WHEREAS, thousands of young lives are in jeopardy as children seek refuge, fleeing communities overrun by organized crime, violence, human trafficking and persecution; and

WHEREAS, Honduras and El Salvador lead the world in homicide rates. San Pedro Sula in Honduras is the world's murder capital. In 2013, the homicide rate was 187 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants driven by a surge in gang and drug-trafficking violence. In 2011, El Salvador ranked second in terms of homicides in Latin America with Guatemala not far behind, making the Northern Triangle one of the deadliest regions in the world; and

WHEREAS, the number of unaccompanied children at the border, which was 5,200 in 2012, has swelled to more than 52,000 this year—and it could reach 90,000 by the end of September; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report found that the majority of unaccompanied children (60 percent) said they were seeking protection because they experienced or were in serious risk of violence in their home country; and

WHEREAS, children have been forced into overcrowded detention centers with unsanitary conditions; and

WHEREAS, an administrative complaint has been filed by a number of civil liberty and immigrant rights organizations, including the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) and the ACLU Border Litigation Project, with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties as well as the DHS Office of the Inspector General—the department's only mechanism for seeking redress—on behalf of more than 100 unaccompanied immigrant children. The complaint includes allegations of abuse and mistreatment while in the custody of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, (CBP) including sexual assault, beatings, racially and sexually charged comments and death threats. Children also consistently reported being held in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions beyond the legally mandated 72-hour period; and

WHEREAS, the United States is a great and diverse nation, founded by immigrants fleeing persecution and seeking a safer, more prosperous life:

**RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers call for an immediate response from the federal government to the humanitarian crisis at the U.S. border that puts the safety and well-being of children first while seeking resolution to the root causes of the forced migration of children from Central America; and**

**RESOLVED, that the AFT as the representative of those who teach and care for our next generation strongly condemn the ill treatment of children in the detention centers and call for a thorough investigation of the treatment children have received while in detention centers. The AFT also calls for greater access by human rights, civic, labor and faith groups to places where children are being held; and**

**RESOLVED, that the AFT demand that Congress authorize the \$3.7 billion requested by President Obama to provide immediate relief aid to the humanitarian crisis at the U.S. border in order to meet the immediate needs of the children being detained in inhumane conditions; and**

**RESOLVED, that the AFT call on the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Human Services to treat the crisis at the border as a refugee crisis that puts the interest of children first and, whenever possible, to extend the same humanitarian protections we have offered others around the world in similar circumstances under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act; and**

**RESOLVED, that the AFT call for due process that provides all children with adequate protections and legal services including a legal advocate who can provide children with guidance through the legal process. Children should be provided with culturally sensitive mental and physical health assessments by DHS, including adequate screening methods by trained DHS agents for children who identify as LGBT; and**

**RESOLVED, that the AFT commit to working with civic leaders, clergy, refugee and immigrant rights groups, labor and other community organizations to ensure that children's health, educational, safety and legal needs are being met. And we will teach these children.**