



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

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### **CVT Says Trump's Declaration Doesn't Respond to an Emergency; It Creates One**

**ST. PAUL, Minn. and WASHINGTON**— The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) today responded to the announcement that President Trump will declare a national emergency at the U.S. Southern border.

“This is a transparent abuse of power driven by politics, not facts, and it sets a dangerous precedent,” said Curt Goering, CVT’s executive director. “There is no national security emergency at our Southern border. There is, however, an ongoing humanitarian tragedy fueled by the president’s policy choices.”

**The “national security emergency” at the border is a myth.** Overall, [border crossings have decreased since 2016](#). In the first half of 2018, CBP agents [encountered just six immigrants](#) at ports of entry who were flagged for security reasons due to their countries of origin.

**The true crisis at the border is a humanitarian one.** As asylum seekers, individuals with few to no resources who experienced violence and persecution, wait for an opportunity to present their cases in the United States, the Trump administration continues to obstruct them:

- Decrease in processing at the border: The wait times have increased, as there has been a 40 percent decrease in the number of asylum seekers Customs and Border Protection (CBP) admits for interviews per day since December 2018.
- Elimination of alternate programs: The Trump administration eliminated the Central American Minors (CAM) program, which allowed children and youth to apply for asylum from Central America. Now, still fearing for their lives, they are forced to make the dangerous trek by land.
- The Administration has flooded our immigration system by placing in removal proceedings individuals whose only “sin” was not having been born in the United States. As a result, asylum applications cannot be processed in a timely manner.
- The Administration is returning asylum seekers to Mexico during the pendency of their cases, where they lack both a support network and access to counsel. This increases the likelihood that asylum seekers will re-experience trauma and become victims of human trafficking, sexual assault and other crimes.

**What is happening at the border demands a responsible and compassionate response.** Asylum seekers must be allowed to have their cases heard fairly and efficiently, and

should be provided the resources to heal from the persecution and torture they endured.

Important steps towards those ends include:

- Placing more trained asylum officers at the border to conduct credible fear interviews—the initial stage to be allowed to enter the country and ask for asylum.
- Eliminating the policy of returning asylum seekers to Mexico, which isolates them from support networks and resources, both of which are needed to begin healing.
- Allocating resources to unclog our immigration court system.

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*The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East.*

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