

# Unseen, Unheard, and Forgotten

## Child Migration from Central America to the United States



Since late 2011, the number of unaccompanied children migrating from central America to the United States has increased astronomically. Unemployment, gang violence, and an increasingly vicious drug trade have been the key factors forcing kids from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, many under the age of 12, to seek asylum in the United States. The crisis reached a peak in 2014, when child migration from these

three countries increased 43% from the previous year. In the period from 2011 through 2014, the number of child migrants has increased by a total 330%. Accordingly, U.S. border security rose in the most heavily trafficked sectors of the southwest border, particularly near Tucson in the West and along the Rio Grande Valley in the East.



Once apprehended, child migrants often face an even more difficult journey navigating the U.S. justice system. Although President Obama put into effect an executive order in 2014 to expedite the hearings and removal process for unaccompanied minors, the courts continued to lag behind. Moreover, when these children appeared before court, 97% of them were denied official immigration status, meaning they

remained unauthorized, undocumented, and destined for deportation. The result has been a 'revolving door' cycle of migration, where children migrate, are deported, and remigrate. Indeed, conditions for most child migrants in their countries of origin are often worse when they return, prompting another dangerous journey northward.

