

U.S. crimes at the border: 7-year-old Guatemalan child dies in custody

written by Sharon Black
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Jakelin Caal Maquin

Jakelin Amei Rosmery Caal Maquín was barely 7 years old when she died on Dec. 8 following her detention by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. She had traveled with her father, Nery Gilberto Caal Cuz, some 2,000 miles from Alta Verapaz, a rural Indigenous community in Guatemala, to seek asylum in the U.S.

A full, independent investigation has yet to be conducted. What we do know from [her father's statement to the media](#) is that Jakelin had eaten and had water prior to being taken into custody by the Border Patrol. She and her father were among a group of 161 asylum seekers detained at Antelope Wells, in a remote area of the New Mexico desert.

Both were first detained at the Bounds Forward Operating Base, one of 17 military bases recently constructed in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. The purpose of these outposts is to catch people, including children. They are not staffed to respond to medical crises even though they deal with large numbers of refugees and migrants in a harsh environment.

Department of Homeland Security investigators earlier found that the bases were plagued with contaminated and potentially unsafe drinking water. "They found 'excessive amounts' of chlorine, iron and dirt in water at the bases, according to their report," [according to the Daily Beast](#).

It took 8 hours before buses arrived to take the asylum seekers, including Jakelin and her father, to their next destination at the Border Patrol Processing Center in Lordsburg, N.M. It was another 90 minutes before Jakelin was transported for emergency medical treatment. By then her temperature was 105.9 degrees Fahrenheit and she was having convulsions, [according to the Washington Post](#).

Jakelin died 15 hours later with her father at her side.

In another example of the cruel hardships and separations that migrant and refugee

families face, a Guatemalan man, Noé Aguilar, was recently [denied a visa by the Trump administration](#) to attend the funeral of his 13-year-old daughter in North Carolina. The child, Hania Aguilar, was kidnapped outside her mother's home and murdered.

No borders in workers' struggle

Struggle-La Lucha spoke with John Parker, a leader of the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in Los Angeles. Parker and his group recently traveled to the Mexican border city of Tijuana to deliver aid to the refugee caravan, along with the American Indian Movement SoCal, #Me Too International March Movement, Cosecha and others. These groups continue to collect aid and travel regularly to the border.

"As a father, I found the news of Jakelin's death to be deeply painful and troubling," said Parker. "The rights of all asylum seekers are being violated. Frankly, all walls need to be torn down, from Mexico to Palestine."

Asked why he felt so passionately about this issue, he explained that his son, who like Parker is Black, is at risk daily of experiencing police terror in Los Angeles. He worries every time his son leaves the house. "So I understand what it means to be a parent who could lose a child."

Parker exclaimed, "There are no borders in the workers' struggle."

