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Harris, Nadler, Lofgren, Colleagues Urge DHS IG to Investigate Allegations of Coercion and Abuse against Separated Immigrant Parents

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Senator Kamala D. Harris (D-CA), House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) led 17 lawmakers in a letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Acting Inspector General John V. Kelly requesting an investigation into allegations that DHS officials used coercive and abusive tactics on detained immigrant parents who were separated from their children at the border under the Trump Administration's "zero-tolerance" policy. These tactics were allegedly used to compel parents to forgo their parental rights or their rights to pursue asylum claims, and resulted in some parents being deported while their children remained in government custody.

"These parents' statements highlight a common fact pattern: parents were separated from their children, denied information about their children's wellbeing, and then subjected to inhumane detention conditions and coercive treatment – including verbal and physical abuse – that infringed on their legal rights," **said the lawmakers.** "Parents allege that DHS personnel attempted to use their children to force them to forego their legal rights or misled them into relinquishing rights in order to reunify with their children."

The lawmakers continued, "DHS' alleged treatment of separated parents in custody raises substantial legal concerns that warrant swift investigation and policy reforms. The alleged coercion and abuse faced by these parents suggests that DHS employees may have violated the Immigration and Naturalization Act and its regulations, as well as international law governing the right to apply for asylum. Also, DHS employees may have possibly violated constitutional due process rights in subjecting asylum seekers to conditions that effectively compelled them to abandon their legal rights."

In addition to Harris, Nadler and Lofgren, the letter was signed by U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ed Markey (D-MA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), and U.S. Representatives Luis V. Gutiérrez (D-IL), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), David N. Cicilline (D-RI), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Val Demings (D-FL), Henry C. Johnson, Jr. (D-GA), and Cedric Richmond (D-LA).

Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below.