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CENTRAL AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER / CENTRO DE RECURSOS CENTROAMERICANOS

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**CARECEN URGES PRESIDENT OBAMA TO PROTECT WELFARE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN CHILDREN,  
AIRS CONCERNS ABOUT PROCESSING REFUGEE CLAIMS IN HOME COUNTRIES**

(October 3, 2014, Los Angeles) – The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN Los Angeles) agrees that the children fleeing Central America meet refugee status requirements and should receive protections. However, the Obama administration’s proposed program to allow in-country processing of refugee claims would only potentially benefit a small number of children and does not solve the humanitarian crisis.

This process does not address the situation for thousands of children who have been detained in the United States. In addition, this decision contains significant restrictions which only allow certain lawfully present, eligible relatives in the United States to request refugee resettlement for children still living in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. CARECEN is hopeful that some children might be helped by allowing their claims to be processed in home countries, but given the violence and persecution many are exposed to, this process could present safety challenges.

“These young people have shared with us that they are often confronted by gang members or drug traffickers outside their schools, or on their way home, where boys are beaten and girls are raped,” said Martha Arévalo, CARECEN Executive Director. “We wonder if the children who attempt to seek refugee status in their home countries would not be subject to additional risk. The administration’s decision lacks any details of how this program will be implemented or who would qualify. There are still a lot of details to be determined.”

“The children are often in life-or-death situations, and feel that their only option is to flee,” said Angela Sanbrano, CARECEN Board Chair. “If it becomes known in their towns that they are seeking refugee protection, this could put them in even more jeopardy. As an organization that has advocated for Central Americans for 31 years, our priority is the safety of these children. We are pushing for wide-reaching solutions that put politics aside in order to show compassion and offer real protections for the children already here and in the region.”

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**Spokespersons are available for interviews**

