

JUDGE BARS DEPORTATION OF GUATEMALAN CHILDREN



MOISES CASTILLO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

A relative of an unaccompanied minor deported from the U.S. reviews the list of those deported outside La Aurora International Airport on Sunday in Guatemala City.

Court temporarily blocks flights for unaccompanied kids

VALERIE GONZALEZ AND REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

HARLINGEN, Texas — After the U.S. government loaded children onto planes overnight to be sent back to their native Guatemala, a federal judge temporarily blocked the flights — with the youngsters still inside — as their attorneys said authorities were violating U.S. laws and sending vulnerable kids into potential peril.

The extraordinary drama played out over predawn hours on a U.S. holiday weekend and vaulted from tarmacs in Texas to a courtroom in Washington. It was the latest showdown over the Trump administration’s crackdown on immigration — and the latest high-stakes clash between the administration’s enforcement efforts and legal safeguards that Congress created for vulnerable migrants.

For now, hundreds of Guatemalan children who arrived unaccompanied will stay

while the legal fight plays out over coming weeks.

“I do not want there to be any ambiguity,” said Judge Sparkle L. Sooknanan, who noted her ruling applies broadly to Guatemalan minors who arrived in the U.S. without parents or guardians.

Minutes after she concluded a hastily scheduled hearing Sunday afternoon, five charter buses pulled up to a plane parked at the border-area airport in Harlingen, Texas. Hours earlier, authorities had walked dozens of passengers — perhaps 50 — toward the plane in a part of the airport restricted to government planes, including deportation flights. The passengers were wearing colored clothing that is used in government-run shelters for migrant children.

The U.S. government insists it’s reuniting the Guatemalan children with parents or guardians who sought their return.

Lawyers for at least some of the minors say that’s nonsense and argue that in any event, authorities still would have to follow a legal process that they did not.

One girl said her parents, in Guatemala, got a strange phone call a few weeks ago saying the U.S. was deporting her, said one of the attorneys, Efrén C. Olivares of the National Immigration Law Center. Other children — identified only by their initials — said in court documents that they had been neglected, abandoned, physically threatened or abused in their home country.

Sunday’s court hearing came in a case filed in federal court in Washington, but similar legal actions also were filed elsewhere.

In a lawsuit in Arizona, the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project said

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Government shutdown looms as Congress returns

After monthlong recess, it remains unclear whether parties will work together

MARY CLARE JALONICK, KEVIN FREKING AND STEPHEN GROVES
Associated Press

Congressional Republicans scored a massive victory this summer when they passed President Donald Trump’s bill of tax and spending cuts without a single Democratic vote. But as they return to Washington this fall after a monthlong August recess, they will have to find a way to work with Democrats — or around them — as a government shutdown looms.

The annual spending battle will dom-

inate the September agenda, along with a possible effort by Senate Republicans to change their chamber’s rules to thwart Democratic stalling tactics on nominations. The Senate is also debating whether to move forward on legislation that would slap steep tariffs on some of Russia’s trading partners as the U.S. pressures Russian President Vladimir Putin on Ukraine.

In the House, Republicans will continue their investigations of former President Joe Biden while Speaker Mike Johnson navigates a split in his conference over whether the Trump administration should release more files in the Jeffrey Epstein investigation.

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RAHMAT GUL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

A U.S. Capitol Police officer walks in front of the U.S. Capitol on Aug. 22 in Washington.