



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 8, 2018

Sessions Warns Illegal Borders Crossers Not to Smuggle Children, Who May Be Separated From Them

Speaking to the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies in Scottsdale, Arizona on May 7, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he has put in place a “zero tolerance” policy for illegal entries on our Southwest border by the Department of Homeland Security.



Continuing, Sessions said that DHS is partnering with the Justice Department and “will begin a new initiative that will result in referring 100 percent of illegal Southwest Border crossings to for prosecution. And the Department of Justice will take up as many of those cases as humanly possible until we get to 100 percent.”

However, it was what Sessions said after that that has received the bulk of the attention in news headlines about his speech:

If you smuggle illegal aliens across our border, then we will prosecute you. If you are smuggling a child, then we will prosecute you and that child will be separated from you as required by law. If you don't like that, then don't smuggle children over our border.

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That statement inspired a number of headlines portraying Sessions as the most heartless individual since Ebenezer Scrooge, including one in the *Washington Post* that read: “Sessions vows to prosecute all illegal border crossers and separate children from their parents.”

While that statement taken in isolation may appear to be uncompassionate, it tells only a small part of the story. An AP report quoted the more complete statement Sessions made to reporters the following day near the San Diego-Tijuana on the border: “We don't want to separate families, but we don't want families to come to the border illegally and attempt to enter into this country improperly,” Sessions said. “The parents are subject to prosecution while children may not be. So, if we do our duty and prosecute those cases, then children inevitably for a period of time might be in different conditions.”

The AP cited Sessions' explanation of how this will work: Children who are separated from their parents would be put under the supervision of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, he said. The department's Office of Refugee Resettlement releases children traveling alone to U.S. family members or places them in shelters.

“Every law enforcement agency in this country separates parents from children when they're arrested for a crime,” U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's acting director Thomas Homan said alongside Sessions. “There is no new policy. This has always been the policy. Now, you will see more prosecutions because of the attorney general's commitment to zero tolerance.”



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Photo of Jeff Sessions: [Department of Justice](#)

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