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June 19, 2018

His Excellency Mr. António Guterres  
United Nations Secretary General  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres:

I write today to request your urgent assistance in the ongoing crisis our country is facing at our Southern Border with Mexico.

As the Democratic Congressional Representative to the United Nations (UN), I am formally requesting UN observers travel to the United States to report on the conditions of detention facilities and treatment of children, based on relevant international law and human rights principles.

I am appalled by the reports and images from detention facilities in Texas and other states along the border, where more than 2,300 children have been separated from their parents by border patrol agents.

This weekend, I will be traveling to the border myself, to witness first-hand the conditions adults and children are facing while in detention.

I urge you to send experts from relevant UN agencies to observe conditions in both Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) facilities both at the border and throughout the more than 17 states around the country that are now housing children who have been separated from their families.

As a mother, a grandmother, and as a psychiatric social worker, I am most concerned for the physical and mental wellbeing of children separated from their parents at their most vulnerable time. The American Academy of Pediatrics has warned that this practice of family separation "can cause irreparable harm to lifelong development by disrupting a child's brain architecture."

You recently said in a statement, "As a matter of principle, the Secretary-General believes that refugees and migrants should always be treated with respect and dignity, and in accordance with

existing international law.” And you added, “children must not be traumatized by being separated from their parents. Family unity must be preserved.”

I sincerely hope that you will consider this urgent humanitarian request in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress