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At the Center for Survivors of Torture (CST), we treat survivors of country or state sponsored persecution, whether it is survivors of genocide, war, domestic violence, or hate crimes. In this capacity, we see families from all over the world.

We have treated numerous children who have been severely traumatized by seeing their parents taken away in the most abrupt, terrifying manner. Children of any age, but especially those who are younger, are profoundly traumatized when their primary caregiver or caregivers are taken away so suddenly and, seemingly, permanently.

CST is concerned for all of the children who, unlike Kevin, remain under the radar. The children who are missing school due to fear of their parents' safety, even upon their return, have a good probability of falling through the cracks.

Left untreated, these children will likely go on to suffer Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and a variety of severe depression and anxiety mood disorders. To put it simply, the removal of a family member in a dehumanizing, traumatic manner will harm the children of that family---left untreated, it is not a question of what disorders they will develop, it is a question of when.

Children's reaction to trauma depends on age, developmental level and cognitive level. Studies have shown that children as young as pre-school can experience the whole range of PTSD symptoms, including hyperarousal, a constant sense of fearfulness, sleep disturbance, irritability, heightened startle response and avoidance. Children over the age of three tend to withdraw and refuse to speak directly about traumatic experiences. The full range of symptoms may not be visible right away, especially in a non-clinical setting.

The younger a child is, the more his or her experience is influenced by the immediate reaction of caregivers following the trauma. For example, if Kevin's parents felt terrified and powerless, they would be unable to lessen the impact of the trauma upon Kevin. Furthermore, if the child is separated from the caregiver, the child is completely left without an emotional compass.

After trauma, children and adolescents can undergo profound personality and mood changes. This can cause symptoms of depression, with symptoms of withdrawal, tearfulness, and isolating behavior. In children, depression often manifests itself as irritability or acting-out episodes. It becomes difficult to concentrate in school or extra-curricular activities. Performance is disrupted due to the child's extreme hyperarousal and anxiety. Children are often misdiagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder or labeled "difficult" or even developmentally delayed as their grades drop and they find it more difficult to connect with their studies, their teachers, and other classmates. If PTSD in children is left untreated, as they get older they may try to self-medicate with nicotine, drugs, food, alcohol, sexual acting-out or cutting.

Inflicting direct trauma upon a child by detaining and treating them in the same manner as a violent criminal is clearly a human rights violation. The treatment of seven-year-old Kebin Reyes is not only unlawful, but also unethical and inhumane. At the time of his detention he was six and a half, at a critical period of development, and extremely vulnerable to the effects of trauma. Children simply cannot handle posttraumatic symptoms as rationally as adults. The best medicine for children like Kebin is preventive medicine---to intervene and speak out against traumatizing children in this manner at all.

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