



## **Nurses call for reunification of Leukemia patient and her mother stopped at the border for months and the end of inhumane conditions**

As more stories of inhumane treatment at our border emerge, National Nurses United (NNU) again is compelled to speak out for patients crossing the border. The story of Ixcell Perez and her mother, Dahlia, is yet another example of the lasting health and traumatic impacts caused by separating family members at the border.

Ixcell is a fourteen year old American citizen born in North Carolina, undergoing painful and debilitating cancer treatment without the comfort and moral support of her mother. While Ixcell is struggling through her treatment for Leukemia, her distraught mother has been stranded at the U.S. and Mexico border for the past three months—separated from her daughter in North Carolina and hundreds of miles from her home in Chiapas.

“Nurses know how important it is to have a loved one at your side when you struggle through a difficult treatment like this,” said Bonnie Castillo, NNU Executive Director. “By blocking her mother at the border, this Administration is causing harm and lasting trauma to both the child and mother. The pain of Ixcell’s illness is being compounded by the added stress of being separated from her mother. The last thing a child needs is this kind of toxic stress when she should be saving all of her physical and emotional strength to fight her cancer.”

Ixcell was first denied entry into the United States when trying to cross the border with her mother three months ago. As a U.S. citizen in need of medical treatment, this kind of denial is shocking. Her mother’s accounts of their treatment at the border, where they were kept in freezing cold conditions and not provided necessary food and water [echo the stories nurses heard](#) and the health conditions they observed when RNs volunteered from February to July through NNU’s disaster relief project, the Registered Nurse Response Network (RNRN), to provide medical care to migrants at a shelter in Tucson, Ariz.

“As nurses we are patient advocates first,” explained Cathy Kennedy, NNU Vice President and an RNRN Team Lead. “I am very concerned to hear yet another story of inhumane treatment at the border. While working at the shelter in Tucson, I saw many patients come out of ICE and CBP custody very sick as a result of the conditions while in their custody. Nearly everyone our nurses saw over the last six

months was dehydrated, hungry, and had upper respiratory illnesses from the freezing cold cells. For Ixcell, in her weakened state, to be unnecessarily subjected to these conditions can only do one thing, make her sicker.”

As part of the international conference of Global Nurses United (GNU), of which NNU is a founding member, leaders of the international federation of nurse and health care worker unions from 27 countries voted unanimously to pass a resolution supporting immigrant justice—and condemning U.S. immigration policy that violates the human rights of migrants seeking asylum. “Nurses and healthcare workers from around the world came together to take a stand because we have seen firsthand the physical and mental health impacts as a result of treatment at the border.” Castillo stated. “Hearing that Ixcell’s mother got no response when she was asking for water for her daughter and help because her daughter was sick, only confirms the many reports in the media and that our nurses have been told directly—that CBP and ICE are denying necessary care. After far too many deaths at the border, nurses are calling for this inhumane treatment to end now and for Ixcell’s mother to be allowed to be at her daughter’s through her difficult cancer treatment.”