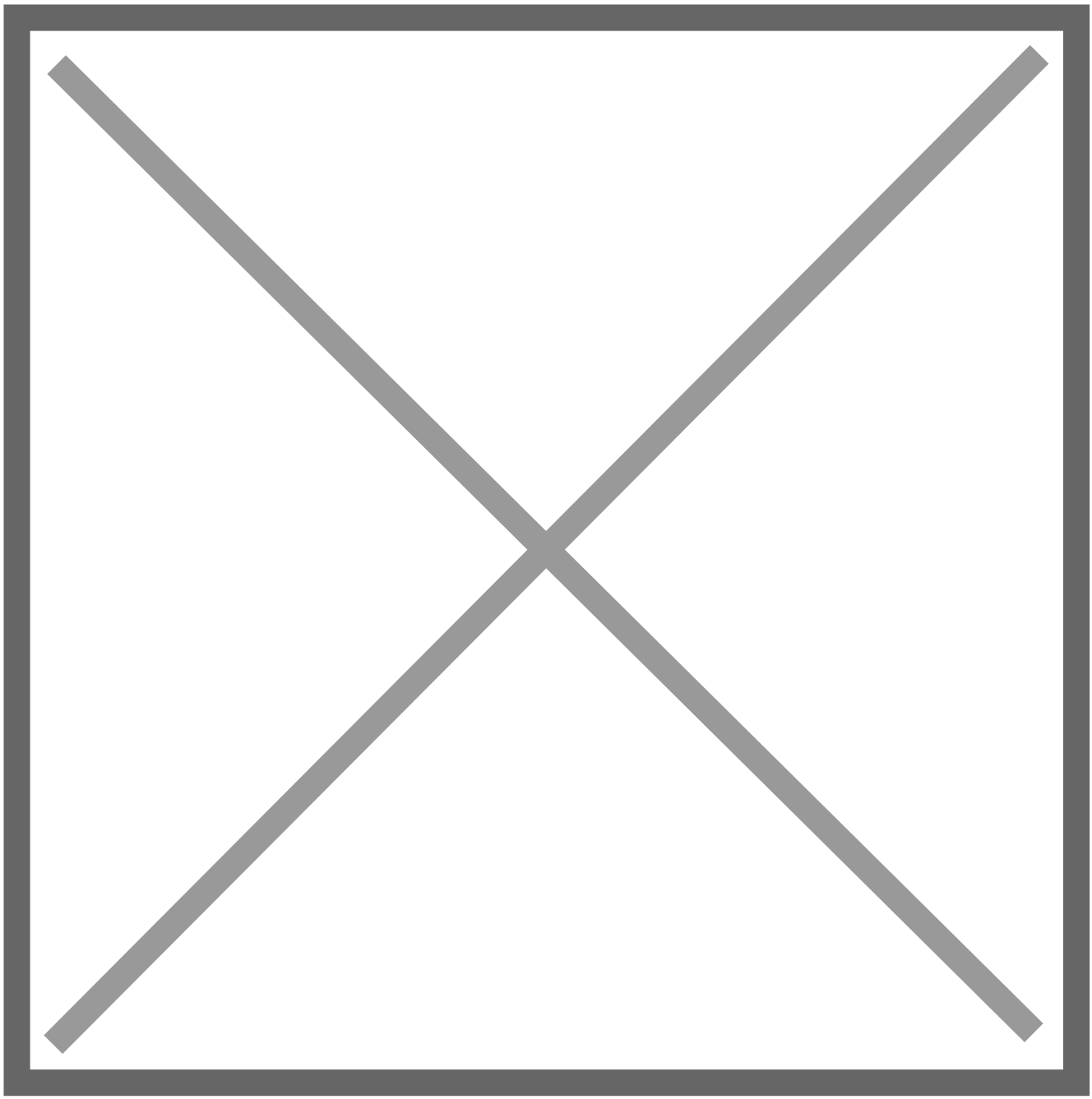
News



A pregnant migrant from Brazil is treated and taken away by medics at a temporary staging area, in Jacumba Hot Springs, Calif., June 4, 2024. The USCCB spoke out April 13, 2026, out after reports detailing harmful conditions faced by pregnant and postpartum mothers detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have become more frequent, despite existing policy that discourages the arrest and detention of such women in most cases. (OSV News/Reuters/Go Nakamura)

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Two U.S. bishops, who lead the U.S. Catholic bishops' efforts on pro-life and migration concerns, have advised the new head of the Department of Homeland Security of their "grave concern" over the treatment of pregnant and postpartum women in immigration detention.

"There are increasing numbers of alarming reports of pregnant mothers not getting the medical care they need while in immigration detention, tragically resulting in miscarriage in some cases, as well as reports of nursing mothers being separated from their babies when detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement," wrote Bishop Daniel Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, and Bishop Brendan Cahill of Victoria, Texas, in an April 13 letter addressed to DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin.

The two prelates respectively chair the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities and Committee on Migration.

Their letter follows a Feb. 13 letter in which more than 30 pro-life leaders urged President Donald Trump, Mullin's predecessor Kristi Noem and ICE Acting Director Todd Lyons to reinstate federal guidance that would largely prevent immigration detention for pregnant and new mothers.

"Medical advocacy groups and investigative reporting have documented prolonged detention of women with high-risk pregnancies, delayed emergency treatment, miscarriages, and stillbirths," stated the letter, whose signatories spanned the ideological and religious spectrum. "Simply stated, unborn children are dying because of this policy."

A new joint report from the Women's Refugee Commission and Physicians for Human Rights found that "ICE is violating its own policy to keep parents and children together," while "detaining pregnant and postpartum women and not providing adequate medical care for pregnant women with life-threatening conditions."

Among the violations cited in the report were "mistreatment, inadequate healthcare, insufficient food, and shackling of pregnant and postpartum women in detention."

One 25-year-old pregnant woman interviewed after her deportation to Honduras told report authors that she had bled for several days while in detention, but had received no medical attention despite multiple requests for aid.

According to the same report, another woman was deported following an untreated miscarriage.

Additionally, a February 2026 BabyCenter poll of over 500 pregnant women found that 1 in 5 said ICE activity has prevented them from seeking prenatal medical care.

In their letter, Thomas and Cahill noted their USCCB committees had last year "expressed deep concern with U.S. Customs and Border Protection's rescission of guidance on caring for pregnant and postpartum mothers and their infants in its custody."

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However, they noted ICE policy "still recognizes the vulnerability of these women and their children by generally discouraging their arrest and detention."

"Unfortunately, that policy seems to no longer be followed in practice," they added.

The bishops urged ICE "to abide consistently by Directive 11032.4, Identification and Monitoring of Pregnant, Postpartum, or Nursing Individuals, which is already in place, and thereby to avoid the arrest and detention of pregnant and postpartum mothers,"

except in "exceptional circumstances" provided in the directive, such as "national security concerns or imminent risk of physical danger to themselves or others."

"Doing so would be consistent with this Administration's recent pro-life actions, including those explicitly welcomed by the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities in January," said the bishops, referencing a Jan. 27 statement in which Thomas expressed his gratitude for "multiple steps" taken by the Trump administration to protect unborn children.

"No matter one's immigration status, there is no overarching justification for separating nursing infants from their mothers or endangering the health and safety of pregnant women or their preborn babies," the bishops said. "In this regard, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to extend the Administration's commitments on life to all vulnerable mothers, infants, and children in the womb."

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.