

## Executive Summary

For decades, the United States has detained refugees encountered at sea in a little-known facility, the Migrant Operations Center (the “GMOC”), in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. In this new report, the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) chronicles the journey of these refugees, who are detained indefinitely in prison-like conditions without access to the outside world and trapped in a punitive system operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and of State (DOS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other private contractors, with little to no transparency or accountability.

Former IRAP clients, other detained refugees, and former staff at the GMOC describe the dilapidated building with mold and sewage issues, where families with young children are housed alongside single adults. They are denied confidential phone calls, even with their attorneys, and punished if they dare share accounts of mistreatment. Refugees are regularly confined to their rooms for weeks at a time. And although the GMOC detains traumatized children, there are no educational services or pediatric psychiatric care provided to them.

These refugees are forced to endure this treatment until a third country agrees to accept them for resettlement, even if they have family in the United States. And the process can take years unless they “choose” to return to the persecution they fled.

IRAP calls for swift action to ensure an end to the systematic human rights violations taking place at the GMOC. Specifically:

- 1** The U.S. government should shut down the GMOC and discontinue its use as a long-term detention center for refugees.
- 2** DHS should afford asylum seekers encountered at sea and on land the same due process protections historically associated with territorial asylum.
- 3** DHS should parole all refugees currently incarcerated at the GMOC into the United States and provide the same option to those incarcerated there in recent years.
- 4** Congress and agency oversight bodies should investigate rampant human rights abuses at the GMOC.
- 5** IOM should cease involvement with the GMOC and end its migrant detention operations worldwide.

As Alberto Corzo, a formerly detained refugee, said: *“Te hacen sentir que migrar es un delito. They make you feel as though to migrate is a crime.”*

The U.S. government cannot continue to hide its diversion and mistreatment of would-be asylum seekers by exiling them to Guantánamo Bay, out of reach of their families, advocates, and the public consciousness.