

Democrats, media silent on child's death at US border

By Patrick Martin
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Barely three days after the media reported the death of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal—a direct consequence of the savage persecution of refugees and immigrants by the Trump administration—both the Democratic Party and the corporate-controlled media have dropped the subject.

Only Caal's family and their advocates, including immigrant rights' groups, continue to press the issue of the US government's responsibility for her death, which came some 24 hours after she, her father and another 161 refugees from Guatemala turned themselves in at a US border station at Antelope Wells, New Mexico.

Initial press reports, based on information supplied by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials, said the child had become severely dehydrated from the grueling trek across the Sonoran desert before crossing the border into the US. But attorneys for the Caal family have now disputed this account, saying Jakelin was in good health when she arrived at the border station, and only began to display signs of illness after being held there for eight hours.

At some point she was separated from her father Nery, a traumatic event that played an as yet undetermined role in the calamity. Her father said she began to vomit and show other signs of distress before they were put on a bus for a 90-minute trip to a CBP station in Lordsburg, New Mexico. She arrived there unconscious and had to be revived before being airlifted to a hospital in El Paso, Texas, where she died the next day.

After issuing initial statements Friday professing shock and outrage over Jakelin's death, Democratic politicians quickly moved on to their preferred issues such as the myriad investigations into the activities of the 2016 Trump campaign, the Trump Organization

and Trump's former lawyer and "fixer" Michael Cohen.

Five leading Democrats made appearances on Sunday television interview programs and none of them brought up the subject of the death of Jakelin Caal. Only one even addressed the subject, when forced to by her interviewer.

This includes the top two Democrats in the Senate: Minority Leader Charles Schumer, appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press," and Minority Whip Richard Durbin, appearing on ABC's "This Week." Both senators were asked to comment on the subject of immigration, and both avoided making any reference to the horrific death toll among refugees and immigrants seeking to cross the US-Mexico border.

Because of increasingly aggressive enforcement policies by Border Patrol, beginning under the Bush administration and escalating under Obama and now Trump, migrants have been driven farther and farther away from safer crossing points such as San Diego, the Imperial Valley in California and the Brownsville area of south Texas, and into the most inhospitable and dangerous desert areas along the Arizona and New Mexico borders.

Schumer flatly declared his support for the general principle of persecuting undocumented immigrants, differing with Trump only on the methods to be used, such as building a wall.

"No Democrat believes that there's no difference between legal and illegal immigration," he told NBC. "We Democrats—we're for a path to citizenship, however, not amnesty, a very difficult path to citizenship."

So "difficult" that many of those who attempt it will die trying.

Schumer reiterated the position he took, along with

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, in their meeting with Trump December 11 at the White House, when they assured him of up to \$1.6 billion in additional funding for “border security,” but rejected his demand for \$5 billion to begin building a wall from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico.

Schumer found time in the course of his interview with “Meet the Press” host Chuck Todd to discuss impeachment, 2020 presidential election prospects and even to interject a cheer for his local NFL team, the New York Giants, but he made no mention of Jakelin Caal.

Schumer’s deputy, Richard Durbin, also counterposed tighter border enforcement to the wall, declaring that the Democrats, not Trump, wanted more serious measures to halt the flow of narcotics across the US-Mexico border. Speaking with ABC’s George Stephanopoulos, he said: “If we are talking about border security, George, we ought to pay attention to something else that came out last week. The Centers for Disease Control said the most deadly narcotic in America today is fentanyl. Fentanyl is flowing across that border from Mexico into the United States and killing thousands of innocent people.”

Durbin argued that 80 percent of the narcotic comes through ports of entry, which would remain open even after the building of a wall. Customs and Border Protection does not presently have the resources to scan all cars that pass through these ports of entry.

Durbin continued: “I asked the people at Customs and Border Protection what would it cost to have scanners scan all the vehicles coming in? They said \$300 million. That’s a far cry from \$5 billion and a much more effective way to have a secure border.”

Two leading House Democrats, Adam Schiff, incoming chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, and Elijah Cummings, incoming chairman of the House Government Oversight Committee, also made television appearances, on NBC and CNN. Neither made any mention of immigration or the death of Jakelin Caal, preferring instead to promote upcoming investigations of the Trump administration, mainly related to the bogus allegations of Russian intervention in the 2016 presidential election.

The only Sunday interview program that broached the subject of the death of the 7-year-old refugee from Guatemala was “Face the Nation” on CBS, which had

booked as its principal guest Stephen Miller, Trump’s top adviser on immigration policy, who could barely contain his rage and hatred directed against immigrants.

Miller gave a pro-forma declaration of sympathy over the death of the 7-year-old girl before shifting to an all-out defense of the Border Patrol, the Gestapo-like police force which, he claimed, “saves about 4,000 lives every single year.” He went on to rant against “left-wing, activist judicial rulings that incentivize the most vulnerable populations to come to our country,” apparently unaware that this directly contradicts his and Trump’s claims that the refugees and immigrants are thugs, rapists and murderers.

The Democrat brought on to provide the supposed “opposition” perspective, Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, noted that the director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement had testified before Congress last week and did not reveal the death of Jakelin Caal, even though by law the agency must notify Congress within 24 hours of any death on the border.

But she went on to reiterate the standard Democratic Party call for “comprehensive immigration reform,” including “order at the border,” as well as “doing something about states like mine where we don’t have enough workers in our fields and in our factories.”

Asked explicitly whether she held the US government responsible for Jakelin Caal’s death, Klobuchar demurred, saying, “I just want to get it investigated and figure out exactly what happened.”

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