

## **It leaves a mark**

14-year-old at the time of separation from his father

I think I was there for about eight hours, separated in the cell. Later, an officer arrived, took us out, put us in his truck, and dropped me off at the shelter. There I already—I thought that from that shelter he would drop me off at my uncle's house, which was here [in New York City]. I was already a little happier, I say "if they are going to leave me here." And later, when I get there, they put me in an office and there they are, all those who are in charge there, in that shelter, they have many children there. And they tell me—they explain to me how the case is.

I couldn't do anything but cry because I was going to spend—I didn't know how much time I was still going to spend there before I was able to meet up with my uncle. So, I felt that I didn't want—I didn't want to know anything about wanting to come, I wanted to go back, right? But I don't know how I managed to—not even I understand how I managed to stay. Because I feel that it was like a very, very, very cruel separation, I believe this really. A separation that—let's put it this way, if you are separated from your parents at an early age, you feel lonely, you feel like you were born alone, that you don't have a family, more than anything.

And even coming here, being with my uncle and knowing that he doesn't have his family, that years are going to go by in which you know—that years are going to go by without being able to see your father and you don't know how long because they don't tell you how long [before] you'll be able to see them. That makes you even sadder and sadder with—perhaps with time that will wear off. But days come when one remembers and, like, one gets depressed, like sad. You kind of have a—how do you say that word? I forget the word. But you have something there that is always marking you.

*Separated: Stories of Injustice and Solidarity*