



## Disciples Home Missions and Refugee & Immigration Ministries Respond to Targeted ICE Raids Against Central American Mothers, Children, and Minor Entrants Now Over Age 18



As a faith community called to “seek justice and defend the oppressed” (Isaiah 1:17), we are deeply disturbed by the recent announcement from immigration officials that they have begun a month long series of raids in May and June expected to deport hundreds of Central American mothers and children who have fled to the United States seeking protection from violence in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Sweeps are expected to focus predominantly on cases in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Texas. This effort follows a two day January sweep that detained 121 mostly women and children from the region, who were living especially in Georgia, Texas, and North Carolina.

The announced “surge” of arrests upon women and children, and upon youth who fled to the U.S. and now are over 18, is an alarming focus. Indeed, such individuals have escaped like refugees, and entered the U.S. seeking security, due to well documented dangers in their homelands.<sup>1</sup> Women and girls are most especially vulnerable; with 80% reporting rape during their journeys,<sup>2</sup> as they seek to leave the Northern Triangle region where El Salvador has the highest murder rate in the hemisphere, and Honduras and Guatemala likewise rank in the top five in the world.<sup>3</sup>

The administration claims that families targeted will be ones who have exhausted all opportunities to attain asylum and permission to stay. Yet studies of cases detained in January have pointed to a different and concerning reality, as 12 of 13 cases from January’s raids were able to obtain a temporary stay of removal after meeting with pro bono lawyers through the CARA Pro Bono Detention Project.<sup>4</sup> Such instances shine a spotlight on the strong need for adequate legal assistance, currently unavailable to more than 70% of family cases in their quest for ongoing protection.<sup>5</sup> Support for additional legal services must be prioritized.

We likewise disagree with attempts to use raids as a strategy to deter persons in need of protection from attempting to flee. Raids are inhumane, ineffective, fear-inducing, damaging to the health and mental health of families and children, and upsetting to the education of children. Once again escalating raids in response to the humanitarian crisis of Central America will further terrorize communities which have already experienced great trauma.<sup>6</sup> Deporting families or individuals who have already faced horrific violence confuses, terrorizes and fractures families<sup>7</sup>—and has already been documented to lead to further violence and even to the deaths of some returnees.<sup>8</sup>

We strongly encourage the Department of Homeland Security to cease and reverse its planned detention and deportation raids immediately. We join with multiple faith and human rights partners to encourage additional support for legal counsel; knowing that over 90% of Central American children and mothers apprehended at the border have demonstrated a credible fear of persecution. We also adamantly urge the administration to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to immigrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras; to halt their deportation back into violent conditions. In the meantime, we will continue to encourage our congregations to welcome detained refugees into the protection of their sanctuaries. For to show such compassion for refugees is to fulfill God’s commands to “seek...the good of others” (I Corinthians 10:24), “carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2), and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Romans 13:9).

**Rev. Dr. Ronald Degges, DHM President and Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, RIM Director**

<sup>1</sup> See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Women on the Run: First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico*, (2015), online at: <http://www.unhcrwashington.org/sites/default/files/wotr/wotr-summary.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See Erin Siegal McIntyre & Deborah Bonello, *Is Rape the Price to Pay for Migrant Women Chasing the American Dream?* FUSION (2014), online at: <http://fusion.net/story/17321/is-rape-the-price-to-pay-for-migrant-women-chasing-the-american-dream/>

<sup>3</sup> See *Why El Salvador Became the Hemisphere Murder Capital* (2016), online at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/01/05/why-el-salvador-became-the-hemispheres-murder-capital/>

<sup>4</sup> See American Immigration Council, Immigration Impact, May 13, 2016, *Reports of Additional Round-Ups of Refugees Met with Strong Condemnation*, online at: <http://immigrationimpact.com/2016/05/13/obama-immigration-raids/>

<sup>5</sup> See TRAC Immigration, Syracuse University, *Representation is Key in Immigration Proceedings Involving Women with Children*, online at: <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/377/>

<sup>6</sup> See The Guardian, January 6, 2016, ‘Fear overrides everything’: immigrants desperate for reassurance after ICE raids, online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/06/ice-raids-immigrant-families-deportation-fear>

<sup>7</sup> See AILA, May 25, 2016, *Federal Government Steps Up Efforts to Deport Central American Mothers and Children Without Due Process*, online at: <http://www.publicnow.com/view/8F3667D925E902AAB0F3F3853B394913E992CA88?2016-05-25-20:01:00+01:00-xx7045>

<sup>8</sup> See The Guardian, October 12, 2015, *US government deporting Central American migrants to their deaths*, online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/oct/12/obama-immigration-deportations-central-america>, and see Think Progress, February 6, 2016, *6 Facts That Erase Any Doubt U.S. Officials Know They Are Deporting People To Their Deaths*, online at: <http://thinkprogress.org/immigration/2016/02/06/3746646/us-refugees-central-america/>



## **FCNL Statement in Opposition to Administration's Continued Deportation Raids**

In mid-May, the administration reiterated the use of raids throughout May and June targeting new border crossers and “criminals”. This follows a set of raids announced in December, conducted in January through March of this year. The Friends Committee on National Legislation urges the administration to halt these raids and dangerous deportations. We are eager to partner with the Administration and Congress to instead address the brokenness of our immigration system, strengthen protections for victims of trafficking and asylum-seekers, and remedy root causes of migration around the world, especially in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

Congress and the administration should reform the U.S. immigration system holistically. U.S. immigration laws should ensure the safety of migrants and U.S. citizens alike, strengthen legal avenues for those seeking humanitarian protection, and lift up the American legacy of offering refuge to those most in need. In the past 5 months, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has picked up students on their way to school<sup>i</sup>, coerced individuals out of their places of worship<sup>ii</sup>, and targeted numerous individuals whose legal recourse was far from exhausted<sup>iii</sup>.

Many of these individuals targeted by these raids, particularly children and families, were unable to find adequate legal counsel or translation services, or were otherwise not afforded their full due process rights. In the past two years, dozens of Central American asylum-seekers have been killed shortly after the U.S. deported them. Their fear of returning home is credible, and we urge the Administration to align enforcement priorities with humanitarian protections by ceasing deportations.

FCNL asks that the Administration restore discretion to the priority enforcement program to ensure that contributing members of our community who have transgressed in the past do not continue to be targeted by these raids. As Quakers, we challenge ourselves to see that of God in each person, including members of our community who have broken the law. Many immigrants with records have worked hard to restore trust with their communities and families and should not be torn from them; we ask that ICE use discretion for these individuals who have turned their lives around.

As anti-immigrant and anti-refugee rhetoric escalates, Congress and the administration must not respond to pressure to be “tough” on immigrants. Immigrants are part of our communities and integral to our nation’s fabric. Because of the brokenness of our immigration system, families continue to be torn apart by deportation and indefinite detention. Our country’s leaders are tasked with finding solutions for our nation; immigrants have been part of this nation from the beginning and their collective rights and protections must be upheld.

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article65538837.html>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.wbez.org/shows/wbez-news/amid-deportation-push-suburban-church-grapples-with-loss/3d269fc3-04e7-4604-bae4-a376a37410c9>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.sacbee.com/news/nation-world/national/article53293805.html>



# Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

P.O. Box 29106 • Washington, DC 20017 • 202-527-7575 • 1-888-364-3388 (toll free) • 202-527-7576 (fax)

---

## FRANCISCAN ACTION NETWORK OPPOSES NEW ICE RAIDS

The Franciscan Action Network (FAN) is alarmed and disturbed by reports that the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will begin a new series of immigrant deportations. Whether these are large-scale raids or individual deportations of mothers and children, they are deplorable. Like the ICE enforcement actions in early January, this anticipated operation is expected to focus on Central Americans who are fleeing from violence in their home countries. The insistence of the Department of Homeland Security that ICE is following the law fails to justify actions which send mothers and children back to violent situations where they may be subjected to violence and even death.

“As a faith organization, FAN upholds the dignity of all persons who deserve to be treated with respect and compassion,” states Sister Marie Lucey, Director of Advocacy, “We reject the argument that a man-made regulation prevails over the right of people to seek safety from violence. Faulty laws should be changed. The Administration continues to pursue detention and deportation policies rather than acknowledge the root causes that compel people to seek safety in the United States.”

FAN agrees with immigrant and faith organizations who maintain that these migrants should have access to legal representation and be given the opportunity to present asylum claims at hearings in immigration court. Even if no raids occur in a particular location, reports of such actions cause families across the country to live in fear of being separated. Both actual deportations and creation of an environment of fear are contrary to American values and core faith values of love and compassion.



## March 10, 2016 STATEMENT — LIRS Statement regarding the Department of Homeland Security's Failure to Protect Children and Youth

WASHINGTON, DC, March 10, 2016 — Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is gravely concerned about the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) [newest enforcement action](#)—"Operation Border Guardian"—which targets many refugee youth who entered the United States as unaccompanied children.

Since January 23<sup>rd</sup>, DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has taken into custody, with the intent to deport, 336 individuals who entered the United States just two years ago as children and have not yet reached their 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays. The vast majority of these youth have parents, siblings and other relatives in the United States. ICE's actions have thus caused family separation and vast turmoil within communities. Such a program runs contrary to basic child welfare standards. LIRS is particularly concerned that many of these youth targeted for deportation have valid claims to asylum, trafficking protections, or other humanitarian protections. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in their report *Children on the Run* documented significant protection concerns among children from Northern Triangle countries and Mexico, which continue to increase. According to one report, between January 2014 and October 2015, at least [83 people deported from the United States](#) were murdered.

Despite children's eligibility for legal relief from deportation, most children who attend immigration court do not have due process protections, such as a lawyer to represent them in court and help them understand the legal proceedings. The [single most determinative factor](#) in whether or not a child is legally allowed to stay in the United States is whether the child has an attorney. It is not justice if the United States' policies cripple a child's access to legal protection and then target those same children for deportation.

Above all, this enforcement actions runs contrary basic child welfare standards. LIRS is deeply distressed that young people are being routinely targeted in or on their way to sensitive locations, such as in places of worship, in schools, and in doctor's offices. These are places where individuals have the right to feel safe and secure. Moreover, these raids have a ripple effect on the wider immigrant community, causing anxiety among other children in mixed-status families and making

families fearful of sending their children to school, visiting places like health clinics, or attending immigration court proceedings.

LIRS urges Department of Homeland Security officials to end this misguided program and to exercise careful and compassionate prosecutorial discretion when determining whether to deport children and others seeking refuge in the United States. Vulnerable families should not be used as a means to deter others from escaping life-threatening circumstances in search of safety and hope. The United States has long been recognized as a guardian of the most vulnerable; we must continue to live up to our reputation and stand for protection.

For more information, please see this [letter](#), signed by over 150 organizations in opposition to “Operation Border Guardian.

## **USCCB Migration Chairman, Archbishop Gomez, Troubled Over Reports of New Immigrant Deportation Raids**

**May 25, 2016**

WASHINGTON—Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, auxiliary bishop of Seattle and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration expressed deep concern over reports that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will soon begin a month-long series of immigrant deportation raids. Incoming committee chairman, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, also voiced such concern.

Like the ICE enforcement actions conducted in early January, the upcoming operation is expected to focus on undocumented Central American mothers and children.

While recognizing the federal government's role in upholding immigration laws, Bishop Elizondo warns against the underlying rationale behind the ICE enforcement actions. "Sending women and children back to Central America will not serve as an effective deterrent to migration because this is a humanitarian crisis and individuals from the region are being forced to flee for their lives," Bishop Elizondo said. "The mission of the Committee on Migration—and USCCB Migration & Refugee Services—is to protect these vulnerable populations."

Archbishop Gomez also noted that "The raids are yet another depressing sign of the failed state of American immigration policy." While ICE is reportedly expected to target individuals with deportation orders, many of these cases raise due process concerns. Data shows many of the families with outstanding removal orders were issued such orders in their absence from court or without legal representation. As Bishop Elizondo noted in a January 2016 letter to Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, the objection is to "the removal of any migrants who were apprehended without first confirming that they received actual meaningful opportunities to present their asylum claims at hearings in immigration court."

"These operations spark panic among our parishes," said Bishop Elizondo. "No person, migrant or otherwise, should have to fear leaving their home to attend church or school. No person should have to fear being torn away from their family and returned to danger."

Bishop Elizondo and Archbishop Gomez remind the administration and ICE that enforcement actions that cause families to live in constant fear run contrary to long-standing American values and challenge the God-given dignity of every person.

The January 2016 letter can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/bishops-statements/upload/Letter-to-Jeh-Johnson-on-Deportations.pdf>.

---

Keywords: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, Archbishop José H. Gomez, deportation, raids, Central American, humanitarian crisis, migration, Committee on Migration, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE

###

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Norma Montenegro Flynn

O: 202-541-3202

Sec,CathPress,DD,DioNews,AP,RNS,Crux

16-062





**The Administration is escalating raids to deport Central American women and children. YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED: Call the White House Today to tell them to Stop the Raids!**

Despite continued outcry from faith, immigrants' rights, and community leaders, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials announced their plans to restart raids on Central American families, many of whom fled to the United States after facing extreme violence, persecution, and poverty. This latest announcement continues the Administration's enforcement scheme of separating mothers and fathers from their children. Five months ago, when ICE announced its plans to target Central American families in raids, faith leaders from across the United States immediately responded [in a statement](#) on Christmas Day, offering sanctuary to those looking to fight their deportation orders and seek shelter from the raids. Nonetheless, ICE raids began in several states, rounding up and detaining 121 individuals. This includes children and families who lost their asylum cases because they were unable to find adequate legal counsel, as well as individuals who were given deportation orders in absentia or through "rocket dockets" that are meant to expedite trials but in reality deny due process.

Raids are an inhumane and unjust response to the humanitarian crisis that has caused thousands to flee the horrific realities of brutal violence and extreme poverty in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. These raids are part of [ICE's systemic maltreatment](#) of a humanitarian situation primarily as a border security issue under "Operation Border Guardian" and creating a climate of fear across immigrant communities. Instead of deporting families seeking safety, the Administration should see that they are provided adequate representation to seek asylum. The Administration should also address the causes of the violence forcing so many individuals to flee.

**Tell the White House to STOP ICE raids on Central American children and families!  
Call the White House: 1-866-961-4293**

You can also call the White House Comment Line directly at 1-888-907-2053.

*Sample Script:*

"I'm from [City, State, Congregation/Community,] and as a person of faith, I urge President Obama to immediately STOP the inhumane and unjust ICE raids to deport Central American mothers and children. Raids don't make our communities any safer. These individuals are fleeing violence and should have access to legal counsel so that they can apply for asylum and protection in the United States."

**Keep up the pressure on social media!**

Ex: [@WhiteHouse](#) As a person of faith I am OPPOSED to your plans to deport Central American kids and families who need PROTECTION. #Not1More

Follow [@InterfaithImm](#) on Twitter and "like" the [Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#) on Facebook to receive up-to-date alerts. For more information on the Sanctuary Movement to shelter immigrants from raids, go to [sanctuarynotdeportation.org](#).



# Church World Service Demands End to Immigration Raids, Calls for Support and Sanctuary to Those Targeted By ICE

May 13, 2016



Washington, D.C. – Despite continued outcry from faith, immigrants’ rights and community leaders, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials announced their plans to restart raids on Central American families, many of whom fled to the United States after facing extreme violence, persecution and poverty. This latest announcement continues the administration’s enforcement scheme of separating mothers and fathers from their children. Five months ago, when ICE announced its plans to target Central American families in raids, faith leaders from across the United States immediately responded [in a statement](#) on Christmas Day, offering sanctuary to those looking to fight their deportation orders and seek shelter from the raids. Nonetheless, ICE raids began in several states, rounding up and detaining 121 individuals.

The administration’s latest announcement to escalate these raids targeting women and children seeking asylum is an affront to our nation’s values. Church World Service joins other faith and community leaders in reiterating their call to President Obama and Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson to immediately stop this surge of arrests and deportations.

“The women, children and families who are impacted by these raids are fleeing unspeakable terror. For them to be persecuted again in a country that prides itself on exemplifying welcome and hospitality is unconscionable. Our country is at its best when we are most welcoming,” said the Rev. John L. McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service. “It is time that the Obama administration immediately end these raids and stop the terror that they inflict on our immigrant brothers and sisters. The protection of people from harm should never be a pawn of any political strategy; and sending people back into danger is not good public policy.”

Adding to their call for an end to the raids, CWS restated its commitment to working with congregations and faith communities around the country to provide refuge and safety for those targeted by the United States’ outdated immigration system, including by offering protection and sanctuary to those fearing deportation.

“At the grassroots level, congregations throughout the country are reaching out to Central American asylum seekers to provide shelter or help find legal support. CWS is working closely with the sanctuary movement so that congregations are ready to open their doors to those in need of refuge in the midst of harsh, unjust and immoral immigration enforcement actions that

are terrorizing our communities,” said the Rev. Noel Andersen, National Grassroots Coordinator at Church World Service. “We demand the Obama administration stop the structural sins of raids and deportations that tear families and communities apart. Instead, the administration should focus their resources on providing much needed legal assistance for these asylum seekers, ensuring due process is upheld, and committing humanitarian aid to address root causes of migration.”

Since 1946, Church World Service has supported refugees, immigrants, and other displaced individuals, in addition to providing sustainable relief and development solutions to communities that wrestle with hunger and poverty.

## AFSC calls on the Obama administration to stop conducting raids



We are deeply troubled by [news that the Obama administration is planning to conduct a second round of raids](#) to deport women and children from Central America. The raids are said to target young people who crossed the border as unaccompanied minors, alone, and have recently turned 18. Targeting young people who have had to make a treacherous journey and sending them back to a country where they may face persecution shortly after their 18th birthday is particularly callous. Targeting women who have made the journey with their young children, equally so.

This is the second round of raids the Obama administration has undertaken since the new year; raids will not stop the surge of migrants who are fleeing from violence in Central America. These border surges will continue periodically until the root causes of violence and insecurity in the region are overcome. The administration and Congress must work with the regional governments in Central America to promote security in the region and ensure that U.S. policies aren't fueling violence.

All too often, we hear stories of young people who are deported to countries in the region and murdered shortly thereafter. From January 2014 to October 2015, at least 83 people the U.S. forced back to Central America were killed. These deportations put women and children at grave risk. We call upon the administration to stop deporting Central American youth and families and to stop the raids.

For information on what to do during an immigration raid, [see our "Know Your Rights" resource page](#).

# Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner Expresses Concern about ICE Raids

06/16/2016

Print (<http://www.rac.org/print/node/node>) Email Share

**Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner sent the following letter to Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, on June 16, 2016, expressing concerns about reports of a new round of ICE raids targeting undocumented families:**

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, whose membership includes more than 2,000 Reform rabbis, I write to express our deep concerns with the deportation raids reportedly planned for the coming weeks.

We were profoundly troubled by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in early January, which primarily targeted Central American families who had come to the United States seeking refuge from violence in their home countries. The January raids and this reported new round raise serious questions about whether the families have been granted legal due process in their asylum proceedings. Furthermore, even as these raids tear families apart and send mothers and children back to potentially life-threatening situations, they also sow greater fear and mistrust, making immigrant communities warier of contact with law enforcement and our nation potentially less secure overall.

Our concerns are rooted firmly in Jewish tradition, which speaks forcefully on the proper treatment of immigrants. This week, the Jewish community celebrated the holiday of Shavuot, when we read the story of Ruth. When her husband dies and she is facing hardship, Ruth journeys with her mother-in-law to Israel from Moab, adopting its customs and traditions.

Ruth's story reminds us of the importance of welcoming people fleeing desperate circumstances, and treating them with dignity and respect. As Leviticus teaches, "When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (19:33-34). Our own people's history in Egypt and in this country, and the beautiful lesson of Ruth, inspires our compassion for others living as strangers; my own grandmother, Fannie, escaped the pogroms of Russia and courageously travelled as a girl to the United States, seeking freedom. We affirm our commitment to create the same opportunities for today's immigrants that were so valuable to our own community not so many years ago.



Our nation is based on rule of law, which all immigrants and asylum seekers must respect. At the same time, ICE must also respect the due process rights of those seeking shelter from persecution. We respectfully ask that the Department of Homeland Security halt these planned raids until further investigation can be made into due process issues, and until all other legal protections for these asylum seekers can be ensured.

The United States must live up to its promise as a safe haven for all people who come to this country fleeing persecution and violence and seeking a new life for themselves and their families.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner  
Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Published: 06/16/2016

**Source URL (retrieved on 08/02/2016 - 11:48am):** <http://www.rac.org/rabbi-jonah-dov-pesner-expresses-concern-about-ice-raids> (<http://www.rac.org/rabbi-jonah-dov-pesner-expresses-concern-about-ice-raids>)



## Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Representing Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters, and Maryknoll Lay Missioners

[About us](#) [Our focus](#) [Alerts](#) [Resources](#) [Around the world](#)

[Home](#)

# Tell President Obama: Stop the raids!

**It's happening again!** U.S. immigration authorities are targeting Central American women and children in another round of immigration deportation raids.

**Take action now!** Send a letter to President Obama to tell him to stop the raids.

Reuters [reported](#) on May 12 that U.S. immigration officials plan "a month-long series of raids in May and June to deport hundreds of Central American mothers and children found to have entered the country illegally" after January 1, 2014.

In 2014, tens of thousands of women and children, including unaccompanied minors, from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, crossed the U.S.-Mexico border in a desperate attempt to escape extreme violence, corruption, and poverty. Thousands more have sought refuge in the United States since then.

Raids to deport these highly vulnerable children and families back to the dangers they fled are **not** the answer. They need access to due process and legal counsel so that they can apply for asylum and protection in the United States. We should not be traumatizing communities and sending mothers and children back to the dangers they fled.

**Act now to tell President Obama to stop the raids against Central American children and families!**

"Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity," Pope Francis said. "They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all, for being more."

**Region:** [Latin America](#)



**Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity.**  
Pope Francis