



Immigration Raids Violate Constitutional Rights and rights under the Violence Against Women Act

As events continue to unfold and the lens of time gives clarity to the raids that took place on the Día de Guadalupe holiday of December 12, 2006, the Colorado Coalition shares its concerns regarding the human rights abuses and lack of due process that occurred in the largest immigration raids in the nation's history.

In Colorado, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials from all over the country raided the Swift plant based on the justification of combating identity theft. ICE arrested 261 people, mainly for administrative immigration violations. Ten people were arrested on criminal charges with another 18 arrest warrants issued for identity theft. However, several human rights abuses have occurred. Arrestees had no opportunity to communicate with anyone. They were held without food for more than fourteen hours as they were shipped from Greeley through Denver to Park County jail in Fairplay, Colorado, and then back to the immigration detention facility in Denver known as GEO. For twenty four hours, these immigrants did not know where they were being taken and were continually moved while shackled. More than half were then forced onto buses to the detention facility in El Paso, Texas or coerced into signing expedited removal to Mexico without being advised of their rights. Many of those taken were sole-caretakers of children, including nursing mothers.

CCADV staff witnessed many examples of the abuse and terror families faced. One Guatemalan family from Ft. Morgan was told by the guards inside GEO that their family member was already deported even though she was there. She was loaded onto a bus moments later and transported to El Paso detention facility over her attorney's plea for her to remain where she could defend her case. Another Guatemalan woman frantically tried to tell officers she was the sole caretaker of her nursing infant but continues to be separated from her baby while trying to post bond from Texas. When another woman asked for release to arrange for her U.S. citizen baby's care, the ICE officer denied her pleas and told her "your child doesn't need you, he's an American."

Many abuses and violations of rights took place. ICE denied detainees access to the charges against them or the amount of their bonds. They were denied the most fundamental right to make a phone call to alert family of their whereabouts for more than two days. Over 75 people were flown to Mexico in the first 48 hours after the raid. Many of these people received only two sandwiches and two bottles of water in that time before being dropped off in Nogales with no money and no way to access their families. Though the union had a lawyer to represent the arrestees in Denver, over 67 detainees were still removed to El Paso, making it more difficult for them to communicate with their attorney, bond out, fight their case, and most importantly, receive family support. Many still have not been allowed to return from Texas despite a District Court order by Judge John L. Kane that all detainees must be returned to Colorado.

ICE established an information line for families to locate loved ones, but many families were too afraid to use the hotline. CCADV coordinated efforts with the Greeley community to help locate family members and to provide assistance to the children terrified by what has happened and wondering if they will ever see their parents again. CCADV also assisted the Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network to identify detainees who qualify under the Violence Against Women Act, and to give presentations regarding legal rights to arrestees.

Understanding the enormous financial difficulties victims of identity theft face, CCADV supports any effort by state and local governments to crack down on this problem. These raids, however, were not about fighting identity theft. Sweeping into a community to carry out mass arrest for unrelated, non-criminal violations does not effectively address identity theft, and leaves children and families terrorized, and it is disingenuous for the government to represent to the media that identity theft prompted the raid.

The relatively few charges filed for identity theft as a result of these raids demonstrate that the vast majority of undocumented immigrants are not working through theft of identity. Most work with invented social security numbers that add \$7 billion dollars in unclaimed revenue each year to the Social Security system.

Recognizing the need for increased safety and security in the post-911 age, CCADV calls on the U.S. Congress to create a better immigration system through development of real and comprehensive solutions, rather than using terror to control immigrants. We call on the U.S. government to end these raids and instead institute a realistic and comprehensive plan for immigration reform that creates a climate of consistency and stability for all, and whose goal is to secure United States borders from real perpetrators of terrorism.

Denise Washington
Executive Director

For those who wish to help the families affected:

Call your U.S. Senators and Representatives: ask that all detainees be treated humanly and given due process, that parents be allowed contact with their children, and that officials be mindful that some may have rights under the Violence Against Women Act. To contact your Member of Congress, call 202/224-3121 and ask to be connected to their offices.

Send donations of money and/or grocery store gift certificates to:

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church
Attn: Rev. Bernard Schmitz
1311 Third Street
Greeley, CO 80631

Phone: 970.353.1747

Please write in the Memo line:
"for the families affected by ICE"

Or order directly on line by going to the following websites and clicking on Gift Cards:

<http://www.kingsoopers.com/>

<http://shop.safeway.com/superstore/default.asp?page=gf>

Send checks to the "RMIAN detainee fund":
RMIAN. 3489 W. 72nd Ave, Suite 211, Westminster, CO 8003

Families continue to struggle for the release of family members. The nonprofit RMIAN has established a fund to accept donations for the payment of bonds, filing fees and bus fees.

For more information, please contact Public Policy Director Amber Tafoya at 303-962-3321 or 888-778-7091 x815 or atafoya@ccadv.org