

**Letter to President Obama
from National Faith Organizations
regarding recent ICE raids on immigrant communities**

February 1st, 2011

Dear President Obama

As faith organizations committed to welcoming the strangers in our midst and to bringing those on the margins into the full inclusion of our communities, we are alarmed and dismayed by the recent ICE raids in Washington and Michigan. These massive raids tear apart families and communities, drive a wedge of fear and distrust between communities and law enforcement, leave citizen children behind without their parents, and assault the basic dignity of people. We call on you to end them immediately.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has stated that it prioritizes the deportation of those who pose a threat to our communities in order to keep us safe. Yet in both the Washington and Michigan raids the majority of those who were arrested either had no criminal record at all or their only legal offenses were related to trying to provide for themselves and their families. In the Washington raid, the majority of people arrested were women, and U.S. citizen children were deprived of their mothers. We do not feel safer when our government deploys armed agents to take away our peaceful, hardworking neighbors, friends, and relatives.

Moreover, the continued and escalating reliance on large-scale, indiscriminate raids violates human rights. There is evidence of racial profiling. Arrested immigrants often do not have access to legal counsel or an appropriate understanding of their rights. Detained immigrants are increasingly housed with violent criminals. They have been denied adequate medical care while awaiting deportation, leading to an increasing number of detainee deaths. The policy of "lateral repatriation" tears apart family members, sending one across the Texas border while a spouse, child or sibling is deported across the California border. These and other practices are cruel and violate our shared religious values.

Mr. President, in your State of the Union Speech last Tuesday night, you rightly called on our nation to "stop expelling talented, responsible young people who can staff our research labs, start new businesses, and further enrich this nation." We faith organizations applaud your support of the DREAM Act, but we remind you that these talented responsible young people also cannot thrive if their parents are expelled. There is something terribly wrong with vowing to work for immigration reform while at the same time rending parents from children and spouses from each other. Effective and humane reform can only be achieved through providing a path to legal status for all undocumented immigrants currently in the country, providing legal and safe avenues for workers and their families to migrate to this country, and eliminating the backlog for families who are separated so that they can be reunited.

Mr. President, we urge you to lead our nation to a return to the ideals for which we have long stood: an embrace of diverse cultures, races, and ethnicities and the upholding of basic rights for all people. As our founding documents recognize, all people, regardless of their legal status, have inherent value endowed to them by their Creator. The indiscriminate raids by DHS violate core U.S. principles and values, diminishing the moral stature of this country that we all love. Therefore, we urge an immediate end to all raids until immigration reform is passed.

In faith,

Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
The Episcopal Church
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Interfaith Worker Justice
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Mennonite Church USA
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Pax Christi USA
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society