

January 28, 2016

Dear President Obama,

As faith leaders and organizations from across the nation we are deeply concerned by the raids conducted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) aimed at rounding up and deporting Central American asylum-seeking families back to the danger they have been seeking to escape. As leaders of faith, we have witnessed first-hand the deep anxieties these tactics have sparked in communities of immigrants across our nation, particularly as word of the arrest of young children and parents has spread throughout the community. The administration's actions are sowing fear and trauma. **Our faith communities are unanimous in the view that these raids must end.**

Through this letter we additionally seek your absolute assurance that our centers of worship will remain inviolable spaces, free from immigration enforcement actions and surveillance by ICE and CBP officials. The possibility or fear of immigration enforcement discourages families from taking their children to school, attending worship services, and accessing essential social services, all of which are good for families, our communities and society-at-large. **In this vein we ask that DHS reissue and broaden the 2011 "Enforcement Actions at or Focused on Sensitive Locations" memo, to include CBP and to reinforce to all DHS employees the prohibition of targeting these areas in routine enforcement actions.**

In too many instances over recent years our immigrant communities have been adversely impacted by the behavior of DHS employees who have over-stepped the bounds of decency, targeting churches and temples, schools and mosques, domestic violence shelters, emergency healthcare clinics and hospitals with immigration enforcement actions. Over the years there have been far too many reports from faith leaders and parishioners of harassment by DHS agents on their way out of their place of worship. The recent raids have paralyzed communities who fear sending their children to school, to taking them for immunizations at clinics, attending worship services, and even putting them to bed at night. No one is made safer when communities fear Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). These invasive actions and the fear they have caused must end.

Historically, and throughout the pages of Scripture, places of worship have been places of refuge for communities experiencing harassment or danger from the society-at-large. Places of worship provide safety for the people feeling threatened by policies or actions by the state that would harm their families and significantly disrupt their lives. Regarding places of worship as places of sanctuary also allows the rest of society to pause and reflect on these policies and their implementation and to seek more humane policies that truly protect all of society, including those experiencing persecution.

As faith leaders, we invoke this same principle today and declare our places of worship as safe spaces, off-limits to immigration officials and those seeking to detain or deport immigrants. **Places of worship must remain safe and sacred spaces where all families can engage in their respective faith traditions without fear of harassment or monitoring by immigration officials.** This principle helps to protect long-held American values including freedom of

worship and the right to an education. We fully expect DHS to respect this important and historic boundary and to not enter our places of worship seeking to detain or deport immigrants or harass our parishioners at or on their way to worship or on their way home from worship.

Respectfully,

Faith-Based Organizations

Christ United Methodist Ministry Center

Church World Service

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Commission on Justice, Peace and the Safeguarding of Creation, Conventual Franciscan Friars - OLC Province

Conversations With Friends (MN)

Council on American-Islamic Relations

Dolores Mission Catholic Church

Dolores Mission Catholic Church

Dolores Mission School

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Advocacy Office

Franciscan Action Network

Franciscan Peace Center

Gainesville Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice

Ignatian Solidarity Network

Ignatian Spiritual Life Center

Immigrant Justice Advocacy Movement

Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice - Oregon

Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Rights

Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Jewish Community Action

Justice Overcoming Boundaries in San Diego County

Kino Border Initiative

La Luz Hispana Hampton, IA

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus

Midwest Jesuits

Missionary Oblates Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office

National Council of Jewish Women

National Council of Jewish Women - Pennsylvania

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Oregon Province of the Jesuits

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Pilgrim United Church of Christ

Quakers Concerned with Immigration Justice
Saint Peter of Rome RC Church
Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa
Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania OH
Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania OH
Sojourners
St Ignatius Parish, San Francisco, CA
St. Agnes parish
St. Ignatius Catholic Church
St. Ignatius Loyola Parish
St. Ignatius Parish, San Francisco
St. Ignatius Parish, San Francisco
St. Joseph Parish, Seattle
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Lowcountry
United African American Ministerial Action Council
United Methodist Church
USA Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus

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Cc: Ms. Cecilia Muñoz, Domestic Policy Advisor
Mr. Jeh Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security
Ms. Susan Rice, National Security Advisor
Ms. Melissa Rogers, Executive Director of White House office of Faith-based and
Neighborhood Initiatives