

Solidarity Statement Concerning Guatemalans in Detention after ICE Raid in Postville, Iowa

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*"No one should be subjected to arbitrary arrests, detention or exile".
Article 9, Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

"Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law."

Article 9, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

As Guatemalans (by birth and by family origin) living in the United States we strongly condemn the Postville, Iowa raid--the largest single-site enforcement operation of its kind in the history of the United States. Of the 390 workers reportedly detained, nearly three hundred are from Guatemala.

According to statistics from the United Nations, over 125 million people throughout the world live and work outside their countries of origin. Human migration is a global phenomenon fueled by war, persecution, economic and social inequality, environmental disaster, and poverty. International migration will continue until the underlying causes forcing people from their homelands are eliminated.

As Guatemalans, we are too familiar with Human Rights violations and their lasting effects. During our country's 36-year long civil war: 200,000 people were killed or disappeared and as many as 1.5 million people were displaced internally or forced to flee the country. U.S. funding and training underwrote the war -- leaving the country in shambles and forcing many to leave. Those of us able to publicly sign this letter and our brothers and sisters sitting now in detention centers and unable to sign this letter, came to this country fleeing the effects of the U.S. funded, civil war. As over three hundred Guatemalans now sit in detention in Iowa, we ask you to grieve with us and protest the obvious irony.

According to the U.S. Constitution, all people residing in the United States, regardless of their immigration status, are entitled to due process of law. The United States is committed to principles of democracy and fairness, yet hundreds of people are detained--frequently without access to counsel and without contact from their families. Many are terrified at the possibility of being returned to a home they may no longer know, or where they will be unable to earn a living wage. In the case of Guatemala, we mustn't forget the additional challenges of returning to a country devastated by decades of civil war. The U.S. policy of detaining and deporting people does not address these realities.

The recent Postville Raids raises questions about the continued role the United States government plays in the lives of Guatemalans. Unlike the war years, however, we now have the opportunity to ensure that core U.S. values of democracy and fairness prevail! On behalf of our brothers and sisters in detention—we call for transparent, fair and humane treatment in accordance with our U.S. constitutional norms of due process and equal protection. We believe that all human beings in this country have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, even in situations of detention and arrest. Though nothing can undo the destruction caused by the civil war in Guatemala, we are currently presented with an opportunity to stand up and not allow the legacy of our government's past to continue in the present and the future. Fellow Guatemalans, join us!

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