



January 1, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of SEIU's 2 million members, I write to express deep concern about news reports that DHS plans to conduct nationwide roundups in communities to deport children and their parents from Central America. I urge you to prevent the implementation of any such plans, and to make a public response clarifying that there will be no systematic raids or sweeps against these families. These families are predominantly asylum seekers fleeing conditions that endanger their lives. If these plans are implemented, it would undermine their right to seek protection from persecution, and it would also send the wrong message about our nation's continued willingness to serve as a refuge for the afflicted.

Based on the conditions in the nations from which the families have come and the available data, many of the families that would be targeted by the reported operation are likely eligible for asylum or other humanitarian relief under U.S. and international law. Their countries of origin have among the highest murder rates in the world, and kidnapping, mayhem, and gang control are rampant. Almost all of the children and families at issue put themselves into proceedings by turning themselves in to the authorities at the border after a harrowing journey of thousands of miles. [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services data](#) on detained families as well as an October 2015, [UNHCR report](#) suggest that the vast majority of the targeted families at the least have strong cases to make for relief.

Under the guidelines DHS promulgated last November, individuals "who qualify for asylum or other form of relief" should not be prioritized for removal. Aggressive tactics such as raids or sweeps inevitably result in due process violations and removals of individuals who are in fact eligible for relief, in contravention of that policy. The consequences of such erroneous removals of Central American families are severe given the documented high risk of death or serious injury upon their return. Moreover, mass immigration enforcement operations tend to spread fear and confusion in communities well beyond those directly targeted, undermining your administration's efforts to make immigration enforcement more humane for those who "are a part of American life."

MARY KAY HENRY
International President

MICHAEL P. FISHMAN
International Secretary-Treasurer

GERRY HUDSON
Executive Vice President

EILEEN KIRLIN
Executive Vice President

VALARIE LONG
Executive Vice President

ROCIO SÁENZ
Executive Vice President

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CTW, CLC

1800 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036

202.730.7000

www.SEIU.org

25090wm

Page 2
The President
January 1, 2016

Rather than sweeps and raids, any enforcement activities directed at these families should be designed to ensure a realistic opportunity to make their case to a judge before being removed. According to media reports, however, that is not the plan. Instead, those caught up in the sweeps would reportedly be summarily removed with few due process rights, based on existing removal orders, which may have been obtained in absentia, often without having received adequate information about the court proceeding or their right to receive a fair hearing on their asylum claims.

We urge DHS to provide better information to families about their rights and responsibilities in the immigration system, to provide appointed counsel to families who would otherwise go without representation, and to offer community-based services to facilitate appearances at court. These steps would increase court appearance rates without resorting to the kind of tactics that will demonize a population in need of care and assistance.

Our history as a nation of immigrants imposes a special obligation to be a beacon for those fleeing violence and persecution. We should therefore be careful not to return children and families to palpably dangerous conditions without carefully and individually determining whether they are eligible for relief under our laws. Raids or sweeps that strike fear in communities would send the wrong signal to those communities. We ask you to reject the implementation of any such policy.

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Henry
International President

MKH:JB

Opeiu#2
afl-cio, clc