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PIA Faith Leaders Call on Congress to Protect Children & Halt ICE Raids

On March 30, 2007, Faith Leaders affiliated with Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA), representing 32 Congregations on the Peninsula, join a national effort to call on congress to halt ICE Raids and hold hearings to investigate I.C.E. behavior. “We object to federal government action that has broken up families, left children abandoned, and traumatized whole communities. Our congregations are committed to protecting those in need, but we should not need to shelter young children asking, “Where is my mother? Where is my father?” reads a statement released by the organizations associated with the PICO National Network

After watching her husband torn away from the family and deported without even being able to make an appeal to a judge, Isabel Ramirez and her children are fighting to find a way to keep what’s left of their family together. “My husband and I filed our papers to become US residents over 15 years ago. I had a legal work permit. My lawyer told me everything was fine. Together we’ve worked hard to provide a good home to our children. Suddenly ICE agents show up and take us away in a van. My children never got to say good-bye to their father who was deported that same day, and now I’ve been told I have less than a week to leave the country.” Explains Isabel Ramirez, a parishioner of St. Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto and a mother of 2 US citizen children ages 7 and 16 who was served a deportation order on March 28th, 2007 after spending weeks under house arrest wondering how she would pay next months rent.

Mrs. Ramirez is not alone. Hundreds of families in the bay area, including Redwood City and Palo Alto, have been devastated by deportations, many leaving citizen children abandoned, as part of national campaign headed by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (I.C.E.); ‘Operation Return to Sender’. “God calls on us to protect the weak, especially children, and love one another, instead we are ripping apart the fabric of the community and leaving children behind” explains Rev. Lange-Soto of el Buen Pastor Episcopal Church in Redwood City who has been attending to families torn apart by the recent raids.

Rev. Soto joins a clergy-led movement on the peninsula and throughout the country who are calling on President Bush and congress to direct the Department of Homeland Security to halt the raids immediately, reunite families, and hold hearings to investigate the allegations of abuse committed by I.C.E agents. “No matter how we feel about immigration reform, leaving children abandoned and violating a person’s constitutional rights are wrong, this needs to be investigated by congress,” added Rev. Soto.

Peninsula Interfaith Action is a federation of 31 diverse faith Congregations from Daly City to Sunnyvale, collectively developing leaders to achieve extraordinary results in the areas of immigrant rights, improved schools, access to healthcare, and reducing youth violence. PIA is affiliated with the PICO National Network with more than 1,000 member institutions, representing one million families in 150 cities and 17 states. PICO is one of the largest community-based efforts in the United States.

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