

May 18, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

As organizations committed to protect and advance the reproductive and human rights of all women and their families, we write to express serious concerns regarding the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)'s continued use of deportation raids as an immigration enforcement tactic against the most vulnerable individuals – including women and children. Our organizations share the common aim of ensuring that all people have access to quality, affordable health care, including reproductive health care – regardless of who they are or where they come from. Deportation raids undermine this goal, threatening the health and dignity of women and families in need of care. We therefore urge DHS to immediately stop the use of such raids on families and halt the forced deportation of Central American refugees.

There is no more basic human need than access to safe, quality health care and no person or community should be put in a position of fear for accessing it. We are deeply concerned that the raids on women and children will do exactly that, not just for the targeted individuals but also for the communities to which they belong. Undocumented individuals in the U.S. frequently report forgoing or delaying care because they fear that they will be reported to immigration officials.<sup>1</sup> As a result, conditions that are easily addressed through prevention or early treatment are more likely to progress into serious health issues. The aggressive use of deportation raids only magnifies this threat. It contributes to a climate of panic and fear, placing an even greater chilling effect on access to basic health care services for the undocumented, their families, and their communities. This adverse impact on health care access is, in turn, likely to exacerbate the already significant barriers to care that immigrants, especially women, face.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that DHS's current series of raids have targeted mainly women and children seeking protection, is an even greater cause for alarm. The Central American refugees targeted by the raids fled to the U.S. for their survival due to violence in their countries of origin.<sup>3</sup> Women and girls are particularly vulnerable as they attempt to escape a region with the highest murder rate in the world. Reportedly, more than 80 percent are

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<sup>1</sup> Hacker, Karen et al., "Barriers to health care for undocumented immigrants: a literature review," *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy*, 8, 175–183, (2015), available at <http://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S70173>; see, e.g., Alexa Garcia-Ditta, "Houston Mom Arrested At Gynecologist's Appointment May Face Deportation," *Texas Observer*, (Sept. 2015), available at <https://www.texasobserver.org/woman-arrested-at-gynecology-office-may-face-deportation/>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Kinsey Hasstedt, *Toward Equity and Access: Removing Legal Barriers To Health Insurance Coverage for Immigrants*, Guttmacher Institute, (2013), available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/16/1/gpr160102.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Women on the Run: First-Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico*, (2015), available at <http://www.unhcrwashington.org/sites/default/files/wotr/wotr-summary.pdf>.

raped during their journey<sup>4</sup>, many taking birth control to avoid unintended pregnancies. The Administration should respond by taking steps to ensure the health and safety of these asylum seekers, not by forcing them to return to the violent and dangerous conditions from which they fled. Moreover, by instilling fear among immigrant families, particularly women and children, DHS risks erecting additional barriers to obtaining basic health care for populations that already face serious challenges in accessing health care services.

Thus, the undersigned organizations urge DHS to immediately halt and reverse the implementation of its planned deportation raids. Our nation's immigration laws should not be enforced through tactics that undermine the availability of lifesaving health care, including reproductive health care, for the families of citizens and noncitizens alike.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth  
African American Ministers In Action  
Alianza Americas  
Alliance for Citizenship  
Alliance for Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment  
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Fraternity USA  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA  
Asian Law Alliance  
ASPIRA Association  
ASPIRE-LA  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP) at the Urban Justice Center  
Austin Jewish Voice for Peace  
Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera  
AVANCE  
Brevard NOW  
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
California NOW  
California Partnership  
California Primary Care Association

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<sup>4</sup> See Erin Siegal McIntyre & Deborah Bonello, *Is Rape the Price to Pay for Migrant Women Chasing the American Dream?* FUSION (2014), available at <http://fusion.net/story/17321/is-rape-the-price-to-pay-for-migrant-women-chasing-the-american-dream/>. In 2010, Amnesty International reported that as many as six in 10 migrant women and girls are raped. Many of these migrants fear reporting the crimes due to the risk of deportation. Amnesty International, *Invisible Victims: Migrants on the Move in Mexico*, (2010), available at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/invisible-victims-migrants-on-the-move-in-mexico>.

CARECEN DC  
CASA  
Casa de Esperanza  
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies  
Center for New Community  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Center for Women Policy Studies  
Central American Resource Center-LA  
Colectiva Legal del Pueblo  
Community Health Partnership  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Cuban American National Council, Inc. d.b.a. CNC  
Detention Watch Network  
Dreamers of Virginia  
El Centro Hispano, Inc.  
Families for Freedom  
Families USA  
Farmworker Justice  
First Focus  
Florida Immigrant Coalition, Inc. (FLIC)  
Forward Together  
Franciscan Action Network  
Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP)  
Grassroots Leadership  
Greater Reading Immigration Project (GRIP)  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)  
Hispanic Federation  
Hispanic National Bar Association  
Hondurans Against AIDS  
Immigrant Defense Project  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Immigration Taskforce, Southwest Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in America  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc  
Inter-University Program for Latino Research  
Justice Strategies  
La Clinica del Pueblo  
La Union del Pueblo Entero  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)  
Latin America Working Group  
Latino Commission on AIDS  
Latino Victory Project  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
League of United Latin American Citizens

Legal Aid Justice Center  
MAIZ  
Make the Road New York  
MALDEF  
MANA, A National Latina Organization  
Mason DREAMers  
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
Mi Familia Vota  
Miami Workers Center  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)  
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women Inc.  
National Congress of Black Women  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)  
National Health Law Program  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Immigration Law Center (NILC)  
National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP)  
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH)  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National Organization for Women  
National Organization for Women (NOW) First Virtual Chapter: Young Feminists and Allies  
National Organization for Women -NJ  
National Organization for Women, Centre County, PA  
National Organization for Women, Missouri  
National Women's Health Network  
National Women's Law Center  
NC National Organization for Women  
New Florida Majority  
New York Abortion Access Fund  
New York Immigration Coalition  
North Carolina Justice Center  
Northern New Jersey Chapter, National Organization for Women  
NW Resistance/Resistencia al NW  
OneAmerica  
Organización Hondureña Francisco Morazan  
Our Family Coalition  
Pennsylvania National Organization for Women (PA NOW)  
People For the American Way  
Pilsen Alliance  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Power U  
Presente.org  
Public Justice Center  
Puentes: Advocacy, Counseling & Education  
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need  
Reformed Church of Highland Park  
Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S.  
and Canada  
Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)  
Reproductive Health Technologies Project  
Salvadoran American National Network (SANN)  
San Gabriel Valley/Whittier National Organization for Women  
San Jose Peace and Justice Center  
SER- Jobs for Progress National, Inc.  
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)  
Sisters of Mercy South Centra Community  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network (SEIRN)  
Speak Hispanic  
Surge Reproductive Justice  
Survivors Pathway Organization  
Tahirih Justice Center  
Taos Refugee and Immigrant Network  
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
United Families  
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute  
United We Dream (UWD)  
VACOLAO - Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations  
Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
Voces de la Frontera  
Voices for Utah Children  
Voto Latino  
Voz Hispana  
We Belong Together  
West Suburban NOW  
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, Texas)  
Women Working Together USA  
Women's Refugee Commission  
Working Partnerships USA  
Young Women United  
9to5 California  
9to5 Colorado  
9to5 Georgia  
9to5 Wisconsin  
9to5, National Association of Working Women

CC: Alejandro Mayorkas, Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security Sarah Saldaña, Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement