

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 6, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
United States Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

I write to express my deep concern with the recent immigration enforcement raids nationwide. Raids have already been reported in Texas, Georgia and North Carolina and it is my understanding that more raids are planned in my home state of Connecticut, among others. Reportedly, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel have been directed to remove individuals and families, largely of Central American origin, seeking asylum here in the United States who have final orders of removal.

While I recognize the Department's emphasis on removing convicted criminals from the United States, I am disturbed to learn that many of the targeted individuals and families in this round of raids have been convicted of no crime other than an immigration violation. ICE should focus on deporting dangerous felons, not families and children who fear for their own safety. I would hope that the Administration would use prosecutorial discretion in these instances, as such discretion is critical to common sense enforcement.

Many of these immigrants, including women and children, have fled unspeakable violence in Central America in hopes of finding safety and security for their families in the United States. Violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador is at historic levels. The undeniable trauma of violence in Central America combined with the often perilous passage to the United States leaves many migrants in desperate need for safe haven and protection. Sending many of these individuals and families back can result in their death. A recent report by *The Guardian* highlights that at least 83 U.S. deportees to Central America were murdered since 2014. This figure may be underestimated due to limited information. The United States should not be in the business of sending individuals and families without dangerous criminal backgrounds back to countries where their safety and security is at risk.

In light of the concerns expressed here and to fully understand these enforcement actions, I respectfully request that you provide timely responses to the following questions:

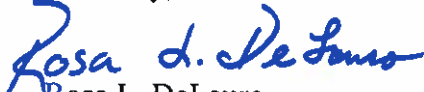
1. Please explain the timing of the raids. What precipitated this particular series of raids?
2. What information has been provided to the families of individuals who are being deported?

3. Why are asylum seekers the focus of these raids and how was this focus deemed to be the best use of scarce ICE resources?
4. How many dangerous criminals remain in the US under deportation orders? Why are dangerous felons not ICE's sole focus?
5. How many, and what percentage, of the deportees have received representation from a lawyer during the immigration hearing process?

This nation is in dire need of comprehensive immigration reform that ends the practice of breaking up families. Unfortunately that is unlikely in this current Congress. Given that, I urge the Administration to prioritize family unification and provide adequate protection for asylum seekers. Many immigrants struggle to navigate the complicated legal proceedings and many would otherwise be granted asylum if they only had access to a lawyer. Given the grave danger and peril faced by these individuals in their home countries, I urge you to end these raids. For generations, new immigrants to these shores, including my father and grandmother, have been the backbone of this nation, revitalizing its values and ideals. My father, Ted DeLauro was an Italian immigrant who worked tirelessly to build a life for our family while helping newly arrived immigrants to pursue the American Dream.

I appreciate the work of our border control and immigration agents; however, we must use common sense when executing the law. Thank you in advance for your prompt response to my questions and concern. I look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,


Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress