

January 07 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Monthly Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network
January, 2007 Issue, Volume 20

No Immigrant Bashing! Support Immigrant Rights!

<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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**Happy New Year 2007!
Get Ready for the New Immigrant
Movements 2007!**

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May Day 2007: Call to Action! National Mobilization to Support Immigrant Workers!

A national day of multi-ethnic unity with youth, labor, peace and justice communities in solidarity with immigrant workers and building new civil rights movement!

<http://www.MayDay2007.org>

Please subscribe to our ISN Immigrants Daily-Info E-mail List!

Send e-mail to: isn-subscribe@lists.riseup.net or visit: <http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/isn>

Getting Ready for the 110th Congress—An Analysis

National Immigration Forum

The 109th Congress concluded with no further mischief created on immigration policy. In fact, the Congress did not even complete the minimum work for which they are responsible—passing the government's budget—instead funding most of the government in a "continuing resolution" until February 15, 2007, and handing off the responsibility to the 110th Congress.

Since the election, Members of Congress have been busy re-organizing themselves. While the details of who will chair the subcommittees are still being finalized, the broad-stroke picture is that immigration restrictionists will be in a weaker position in the 110th Congress. The hard-line restrictionists who were in a position to block immigration reform—in the House in particular—have either been booted out of office or, by virtue of the Republicans' loss of control of the House and thus of the Committees, have been demoted.

In the Senate, Senator Leahy (D-VT) will Chair the Judiciary Committee, taking over from Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA). The Immigration Subcommittee Chair will pass from John Cornyn (R-TX) to Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), who resumes a role he has had many times in his Senate career. In the House, although the Democratic caucus has not made their final decisions, John Conyers (D-MI) would get the Chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee, taking over from James Sensenbrenner (R-WI). Press reports indicate that Zoe Lofgren of California is seeking the Chair of the Immigration Subcommittee.

While the opponents of comprehensive reform have been demoted, it is still, basically, a 50-50 Congress representing a 50-50 country. Comprehensive immigration reform will not come easily. Any sound immigration legislation that might pass must have bi-partisan support. Republican divisions on immigration have been much in the news until now because Republicans held the reins of power. Now that the Democrats are in charge, divisions in their ranks will come under the magnifying

glass. To pass comprehensive reform, the Democratic leadership will need Republican votes. As with just about any issue, any legislation that stands a chance of enactment will require compromise.

Still, there is a window of opportunity for comprehensive reform. Both the House and Senate leadership (as well as the President) are now talking about comprehensive immigration reform being a priority. If actually treated as a priority, there could be action prior to the time, later in the year, when Presidential politics complicates the immigration debate.

In addition to this “pull factor” of opportunity, there are what I’ll call “push factors” making comprehensive reform an urgent matter. All around the country, as the budget for immigration enforcement has increased, the prevalence of immigration raids has increased, and the ripple effect of fear among immigrants is increasing. The immigration raids, resulting in otherwise law-abiding workers being jailed and deported, are seen as unjust and absurd, but these screws are likely to continue to tighten until Congress acts to reform the laws in a comprehensive manner; the enforcement agency is getting more money, and it cannot, on its own, decide not to enforce the laws on the books, no matter how bad those laws are. Another “push factor” is the economic loss that employers are feeling in certain sectors as a result of not having the workers they need. Unless there is a major downturn in the economy, the economic screws will continue to tighten as well.

Stay tuned for details on the immigration debate as it begins in the 110th Congress. Normally, we can expect not much to happen in January, until after the State of the Union address at the end of the month. We will keep you informed as final decisions are made as to who the key players will be in the Committees having jurisdiction over immigration.

Naturalization Fees Expected to Increase

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) has indicated that it will soon be proposing a fee increase for applications for naturalization and other immigration benefits. We understand that the fee increases may be “significant.” The citizenship application fee, now \$400, could double. The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) reports that USCIS has performed a comprehensive fee study required to justify their fee increases. It is being reviewed by the White House Office of Management and Budget. The study has not been made public.

A number of factors have conspired to burden naturalization applicants (and others) with fee increases of 450 percent since 1990. Congress has mandated that USCIS recover its costs for processing applications. Applicants must not only pay for the processing of their own application, but included in the fee is the charge of processing applications for which there is no fee—refugee and asylee applications, for example, and applications of those who successfully gain a needs-based waiver of fees. Other factors include USCIS calculations and processes that create disincentives for greater efficiency. For example, when the agency is sued by applicants for lengthy delays or for other reasons, the cost of the litigation is incorporated into the application fees. In another example, applicants for certain benefits can gain quicker processing by paying a “premium processing fee” of \$1,000. That extra \$1,000 per applicant accounted for nine percent of USCIS’s fee revenue in Fiscal Year 2005. The latest Annual Report to Congress from the USCIS Ombudsman discusses the “pervasive and serious” problems that continue to plague USCIS processes.

A proposed increase in fees will be published in the Federal Register, with a period of time for the public to comment. Another significant increase in naturalization fees will serve as a barrier to citizenship. We hope that advocates comment when the opportunity to do so arrives.

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Tell ICE: Release Palestinian Family NOW!

Arab American Community Coalition

NOTE: the cell phone # for San Antonio ICE Field Office Director Marc Moore is (210) 347-6414 (office phone is 210-967-7175)

A suggested message: Why is the Ibrahim family being detained? They are clearly not a flight risk or a threat to society. Jail is no place for a pregnant mother and her young children. They are perfect candidates for release under supervision. Why are you punishing them with detention at taxpayer expense?

Start the New Year off Right, Please Help Save a Family

The Arab American Community Coalition (theaacc.org) has just learned of an entire Palestinian family - the Ibrahims – being held in jail in Texas while waiting an unjustified deportation. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) grabbed the family of five in a Gestapo-like raid on November 3, 2006.

The Ibrahims came to the United States legally and applied for asylum. They have been honest and forthright with immigration from the beginning. They were denied asylum and have filed to reopen their asylum case. In the meantime, the family is to be deported and is being held in jail! As an American citizen, the 2-year-old daughter was ripped from her mother's arms and is in a foster home.

The plot thickens:

To make matters worse, as Palestinian refugees from the Occupied Palestinian Territories they have no travel documents. The US government has attempted to obtain Jordanian passports for the family but the applications were denied. The family will have to languish another month in jail while ICE contacts the Israeli embassy. Even though Israel has no jurisdiction to issue travel documents to Palestinians to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, ICE insists on contacting Israel. In the past, Israel has issued illegal documents with ICE flying deportees into Tel Aviv and the deportees marched across the border to the West Bank in Palestine. It is extremely dangerous for Palestinians to enter Palestine with Israeli travel documents. The family would be marked with suspicion.

The family in jail:

The pregnant mother, Hanan Ahmad, is in one cell with her 5-year-old daughter, Faten. The 7- and 12-year-old sisters - Maryam and Rodaina - share another cell. The 15-year-old boy, Hamzeh, is in yet another cell at T. Don Hutto jail. The father and husband, Salaheddin Ibrahim, is being held in another jail in Haskell, Texas. Born in the US, the youngest daughter, only 2-years-old, is living with strangers in a foster home.

The little 5-year-old girl, Faten, is constantly getting in trouble with the guards for not standing still during population counts, which are taken four times daily. Maryam, the 7-year-old cries for her mother at night. Maryam, Rodaina and Hamzeh have missed nearly two months of school. The children miss their father, their baby sister, other family members and friends. The pregnant mother feels sick, tired and overwhelmed. The family is separated and scared not knowing what the future holds. Not only is this a waste of our tax dollars (\$95 per person per day), it is inhumane and unjust!

For More information please visit The Arab American Community Coalition (<http://www.theaacc.org>)

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National Immigrant Solidarity Network: Vision and Plans for 2007

Lee Siu Hin

National Coordinator – National Immigrant Solidarity Network (NISN)

Thank you for everyone supports our important work at 2006.

NISN will be organizing many important projects include: immigrant rights education, multi-ethnic organizing and national campaigns:

- July, 2007 Washington D.C. 2nd National Grassroots Immigrant Strategy Conference
- Multi-languages immigrant rights educational materials (postcards, flyers and comic book)
- Spring and fall national immigrant rights education tours
- Updating our NISN web page <http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>
- May Day 2007 National Mobilizations for Immigrant Workers Rights
- National Immigrant Support Hotlines
- NISN Internship Projects
- Opening NISN field office at San Francisco, CA

Here's how you can help NISN:

- 1) Join our e-mail list, so you can stay updates our work; you also can post your organizational updates and news.
- 2) Join our working groups and bi-monthly conference calls.
- 3) We need more volunteers! Includes: translators, graphic designers and community organizers.
- 4) Donate to us! We are volunteer-based organization purely "out of the pocket, passing the bucket" operation, your supports will be very important!

If you're interests to help us, please call: (213)403-0131 or e-mail: info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org

Immigration News Briefs from Across the Country

Immigration News Briefs is a weekly English-language summary of US immigration news, e-mail: nicaig@panix.com.

1. KROME DETAINEES PROTEST

On Dec. 8, Haitian and Jamaican detainees at Krome Service Processing Center outside Miami in Dade County, Florida, refused to leave their dormitory to protest delays in obtaining travel papers from their consulates, immigration officials said; these delays have delayed their stay in detention awaiting deportation. The protest led Michael Rozos, field office director for the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Florida office of detention and removal, to visit the Krome dormitory and speak to the detainees there on Dec. 8, accompanied by a "disturbance control team," said ICE spokesperson Barbara Gonzalez. She said team members were "dressed appropriately." While the detainees were frustrated at the delay in travel papers, some also talked about "the amount of people at Krome," Gonzalez said. A Haitian detainee attributed the tense atmosphere to crowded conditions. "There are just too many people here right now," he said. "We all are just desperate to get out." Krome's publicly-stated capacity of about 580 detainees has been exceeded for months. Gonzalez admitted on Dec. 14 that the number of detainees at Krome was 927. Gonzalez said 120 detainees would be transferred elsewhere on Dec. 19 and 50 others would be deported soon.

In late September, dozens of detainees signed a letter to the Miami Herald complaining about conditions at Krome. Another 255 detainees complained in a November letter that overcrowding at the facility is "causing a lot of tension that leads to confrontations, unsanitary dorm, showers, and clogged toilets...."

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (FIAC) executive director Cheryl Little said Krome "is becoming more and more overcrowded. It's getting dirty inside, and people are getting ill because of it." Little said one of her lawyers went to Krome Dec. 8 and was told by a guard that there was a "riot" and that the facility was in "lockdown." Little said the lawyer "was told that he couldn't go in, and that he better check before coming over the weekend because it might still be in lockdown." Gonzalez said there was no lockdown, and visiting hours were normal over the weekend of Dec. 9.

Ralph Latortue, the Haitian consul in Miami, went to Krome Dec. 13 for an annual holiday visit with Haitian detainees. Latortue told the Miami Herald that 60 of the 83 Haitians at Krome complained of mistreatment, lack of medical attention and overcrowding. He said some detainees, particularly those with criminal records, complained about delays in travel documents. Under current Haitian government regulations, Latortue said, authorities in Port-au-Prince must pre-approve the return of Haitians with criminal records, and the process can take months. Latortue said 75% of the 83 Haitians at Krome have criminal records.

Latortue said that during his meeting at Krome, some of the Haitian detainees told him about an incident on Dec. 8 that involved an "altercation with guards." At least two detainees who were witnesses told a FIAC lawyer that a guard pushed and "punched" a detainee, as other agitated detainees watched, according to Little. A worker at the facility who asked not to be identified said guards interrupted some immigration court proceedings during the episode.

ICE spokesperson Gonzalez said the dormitory protest was peaceful, with Haitian and Jamaican detainees refusing to leave their pod or dormitory to take meals. But Gonzalez acknowledged that an allegation was later made "against a guard." She had no details. "We take all allegations very seriously and it will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action will be taken," Gonzalez said.

Jamaican consul Ricardo Allicock visited Krome on Dec. 11 to meet with the more than 50 Jamaican detainees there. Allicock said many of the detainees were frustrated that they would not spend the holidays with their families back home because they have yet to be deported. The majority of the Jamaicans there have been waiting less than two months to be deported, he said. [*Miami Herald* 12/16/06]

2. US AND CANADA DEPORT 99 AFRICANS

Over the weekend of Dec. 16, ICE officers returned to the US after deporting 82 Nigerians and 17 Liberians on a joint charter removal flight conducted with the government of Canada. It was the largest US deportation flight to Africa in two years. The flight used chartered commercial aircraft and was staffed by officers of the ICE Office of Detention and Removal Operations. Eight of the Nigerians were deportees from Canada; escorting officers from Canada accompanied the flight. The others deported on the flight had been housed at detention facilities across the US; they were brought to the Batavia Federal Detention Facility near Buffalo, New York, shortly before the flight. More than 60 of the deportees had criminal records. [*ICE News Release* 12/19/06]

3. MAINE ACTIVIST'S HOME RAIDED

On Dec. 14, more than a dozen ICE agents raided the home of longtime immigrant advocate Ben Guiliani in South Portland, Maine. The agents were seen carting out numerous boxes of evidence and computer equipment, according to the Maine Public Broadcasting Network. A friend and fellow activist said agents also showed up at Guiliani's office elsewhere in the city. Guiliani said he was out of state when the agents showed up at his house, but that family members were home. Nobody has been charged or arrested, he said. The immigration agency notified South Portland police of the operation shortly after

9 am, but did not provide specifics of the investigation, said Police Chief Ed Googins.

A US citizen of Mexican descent, Guiliani has headed the Maine Migrant Workers Advocacy Group and has involved in workplace lawsuits against Wal-Mart and the former DeCoster egg farm, alleging bias and discrimination against Latino workers. He helped win major improvements in working and living conditions at DeCoster. He currently heads a firm called Azteca Consulting Associates Inc., which is involved in a variety of government and business matters, including import and export, Hispanic relations, labor search management and safety consulting, according to incorporation records. [*Portland Herald (ME) 12/15/06*]

4. SWIFT RAIDS PROTESTED

On Dec. 14, dozens of activists in Des Moines, Iowa took part in a rally protesting the arrests by ICE of some 90 immigrants at the Swift plant in Marshalltown, Iowa. The Marshalltown raid was one of six such raids on Dec. 12; in all, ICE agents arrested 1,282 workers at Swift & Co. meatpacking plants in six states, claiming the sweeps were part of an investigation into identity theft. [*WHBF.com 12/15/06*] On Dec. 17, clergy members spoke out at an evening service in Des Moines called to protest the raids. About 200 people came to Grace United Methodist Church to hold candles and pray in solidarity with detainees and their families. The "Making Room at the Inn" event included multilingual speeches, prayers and hymns. "Jesus was not mindful of Social Security numbers, or countries of origin, or of native languages," said the Rev. Barbara Dinnen of the Las Americas Comunidad de Fe of the United Methodist Church. [*Des Moines Register 12/18/06*]

In a letter to President George W. Bush on Dec. 20, Iowa governor Tom Vilsack complained that ICE officials were not responding to family members' inquiries about loved ones detained in the Swift raids. "To this day, the whereabouts of some of these people are still unknown," Vilsack wrote. "Considering the hardship this has on their families, silence as to their condition is not acceptable." Vilsack urged Bush to also disclose the identities and locations of the detainees to community leaders and faith-based leaders in the six states "so officials can better address the needs of family members left behind." Vilsack referred to a morning news conference on Dec. 20 in which Bush called for immigration reform, saying that "such changes... will come too late for the families with children who are searching for their parents today." ICE spokesperson Jamie Zuieback responded that privacy concerns prevent immigration officials from publishing the names of detainees, but they will work with Vilsack "on matters of specific concern." [*Des Moines Register 12/21/06*] A day earlier, Dec. 19, Vilsack and Maj. Gen. Ron Dardis, the top officer of the Iowa National Guard, wrote to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, calling ICE's actions in the raids "completely unacceptable," saying agents undermined the public's trust in government, potentially jeopardized the safety of law enforcement personnel in Iowa and could have

compromised undercover operations. Vilsack and Dardis said they will not cooperate with federal immigration officials in the future unless they act more responsibly and provide better coordination with state officials. [*Des Moines Register 12/20/06*]

On Dec. 15 in Colorado, immigrant rights advocates gathered in Greeley, Durango, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Grand Junction and other communities to hold candlelight vigils and join hands to support the families separated by the raids and protest the treatment of the 260 workers arrested in the Dec. 12 raid at the Swift plant in Greeley. "This tragedy is not about 'identity theft' or 'criminal activity' as...ICE contends," wrote the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition in a press release announcing the vigils. "It is about women and men working to feed their families and provide for a better life." [*Denver Daily News 12/19/06; Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition Press Release 12/14/06*] On the evening of Dec. 18, a crowd of 75-100 people from across the region gathered at the office of El Comité de Longmont in Longmont to protest the raids. The group lit candles and marched down Main Street before rallying on the steps of the Longmont Safety and Justice Center. Many carried signs that read, "No human is illegal." Others spoke of a basic human right of people to try to improve their life and that of their family, regardless of borders. [*Greeley Tribune 12/19/06*] In San Antonio, Texas on Dec. 21, Latino activist groups held a news conference to condemn the raids and call for an end to such worksite enforcement until Congress can come up with comprehensive immigration reform. [*San Antonio Express-News 12/21/06*]

On Dec. 15, over 200 people picketed outside the ICE offices in Chicago to protest the raids. The protest was initiated by the March 10th Movement, and members of the Centro Sin Fronteras, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Mexico Solidarity Network and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union also took part. The UFCW represents workers at five of the six raided Swift plants. [*Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) 12/21/06*] On Dec. 20, more than 30 people rallied in below-freezing temperatures outside the Wallace F. Bennett Federal Building in downtown Salt Lake City, Utah to protest ICE's arrests of 154 workers during the Dec. 12 raid at the Swift plant 60 miles away in Hyrum. A union member held a sign demanding "workers' rights, human rights" for undocumented laborers. "We see this as a racist act of state terrorism," said David Hansen, a member of the advocacy group Brown Berets in Salt Lake City. The protesters wore yellow bracelets to symbolize the ones ICE apparently used to mark brown-skinned workers during the raid at the Swift plant in Hyrum; white workers were given blue bracelets and were not required to prove their citizenship, witnesses said. ICE spokesperson Lori Haley said she knew nothing of the yellow bracelets, but denied that ICE agents targeted Swift employees because of their skin color. A handful of members of the anti immigrant Utah Minuteman Project held a counter-protest across the street, waving signs that read, "defending our borders, culture and language." [*Salt Lake Tribune 12/21/06; KCPW News 12/21/06*]

Bring the Mandate for Peace to Washington DC on Jan. 27-29: March and Lobbying Day
Organized by: United For Peace & Justice (UFPJ), endorsed by National Immigrant Solidarity Network (NISN)

Join United for Peace and Justice (<http://www.UnitedforPeace.org>) in a massive march on Washington, D.C., on Sat., January 27, 2007 to call on Congress to take immediate action to end the war. On Mon, January 29, UFPJ will call for Congressional Lobbying Day, NISN will support the UFPJ call and organize immigrant Congressional visit and lobbying at the same day, we encourage peace and immigrant rights activists to come to Washington D.C., tell the new Congress: Act NOW to Bring the Troops Home! And Support Full Amnesty to the Immigrants!

For more information, please contact NISN DC field office: (202)595-8990, e-mail: info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org

Please Donate to National Immigrant Solidarity Network!
All Donations Are Tax Deductible!

We need to reach our \$50,000 goals by the end of the October!
Can You be part of the history to support us to support our immigrant organizing?

Friends:

I am again personally appeal for fund raising appeals for National Immigrant Solidarity Network. This is the critical moments for the immigrant rights, and peace & justice movements! Right-Wing anti-immigrant, pro-war, anti-labor forces in the Washington D.C. are pushing their racist agendas to against immigrants and more money for the war. We need to continue organize ourselves to send our LOUD VOICE to the Congress and the President our mass dissent!

Make check payable to ISN/AFGJ and it will be tax deductible! Send your check to:

ActionLA / The Peace Center
8124 West 3rd Street, Suite 104
Los Angeles, California 90048

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(\$35 or more will receive 1 year free subscriptions of the Immigration Alert! Newsletter)

About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

ISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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Please donate to ISN! (All donations are tax deductible!)

Check pay to: **NISN/AFGJ**
Send to: **ActionLA / The Peace Center**
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