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## A National Call for Solidarity

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# A NATIONAL CALL FOR SOLIDARITY



**Postville, Iowa, May 12, 2009**

On this first anniversary of the ICE raid at Agriprocessors, a meat processing plant in Postville, Iowa, we publicly express concern about treatment of immigrants in our country, especially those affected by workplace raids. We are aware that the Department of Homeland Security is adopting new tactics, taking steps away from harming the immigrant and focusing more on employer-related issues. We support that and we applaud President Obama's willingness to address the issue of immigration soon. Nonetheless, continued raids are very detrimental both to immigrants and to local communities. Clearly comprehensive immigration reform needs to happen before enforcement. In the meantime, we call on President Obama, the Congress and Janet Napolitano, director of the Department of Homeland Security, to order an immediate moratorium on ICE workplace raids.

Each immigration enforcement raid creates a local humanitarian crisis and causes undue suffering to detainees and their families. The separation of families makes immigrants already vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and human trafficking, all the more vulnerable. The raids especially harm children. In a number of cases US citizen children have been separated for several days from a sole caregiver or single parent. When a raid occasions

**Image:** Portion of sketch depicting the day of the raid by a Postville High School Student.

the effective deportation of the whole family, citizen children are thrust into a country entirely foreign to them. Often a detained parent is moved to a detention center in distant parts of the country, making it difficult for family members to locate and contact them.

There is also serious concern about the harsh treatment of detainees during the raids as well as the impact of prison exposure to criminal behavior. Detainees from the raids have not always received appropriate representation and due process. In the Postville, Iowa, raid there is evidence that detainees did not understand the criminal charges filed against them and were encouraged to plead guilty to a felony charge to avoid a long detention waiting for a trial. No bond was available. The process violates basic human rights and should be immediately halted.

We also call for respect for the rights and due process of those who remain in detention. We urge the swift release of those who pose no threat to the community and the increased implementation of the more cost-effective and humane community-based alternatives to detention.

Our faith traditions which teach us to welcome the stranger and the foreigner compel us to reject the current practice of high profile workplace raids. We call for an immediate moratorium on the ICE raids and the humane treatment and expeditious release of those still in detention.

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