



NJ Civil Rights Defense Committee

Statement by NJ Civil Rights Defense Committee On Withdrawal of Dogs from Detention Centers

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The victory of immigrant and civil rights groups in getting dogs out of the immigrant detention centers was the result of an 18-month long campaign by NJ Civil Rights Defense Committee (NJCRDC), Families for Freedom and others to expose the torture and abuse inflicted on the detainees, a campaign that led to widespread reporting of the abuses by NPR and El Diario. A key part of this campaign was NJCRDC's Detainee Newsletter, which acted as a conduit for information from the detainees to the public and press. Unable to withstand the public exposure of their mistreatment, ICE had no choice but to pull the dogs out.

However, the abuse of the detainees by the dogs is only one part of the much larger abuse of incarcerating the detainees at all. Despite some mis-statements in the press to the contrary, NONE of the detainees is charged with any crime. They are held as "civil detainees" in violation of the Fifth and Sixth Amendments of the Bill of Rights, which guarantee that "no person... shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law" including a "speedy and public trial by an impartial jury... (and) assistance of counsel". These rights are in no way limited to citizens, but apply to all, citizen and non-citizen alike. When the rights of any are trampled on, the rights of none of us can be secure. The only way to end this much broader abuse is to free all the detainees, that is all who are held without criminal charge, wherever they are held by the US government, whether in the US, at Guantanamo Bay or elsewhere in the world.

The detentions themselves are not an isolated policy. They are part of a much broader campaign of harassment and oppression by the government and allied private groups aimed at the entire immigrant community. Across America immigrants are now being subjected not only to raids, deportations, and illegal and unconstitutional detentions, but attacks ranging from evictions to murder. The coherent aim of these policies is to reduce the immigrants to a terrified population incapable of protesting anything that is done to them, forcing them to accept sub-minimum wages and working conditions, and eventually reducing them to little more than slaves. The effect is to introduce into the United States a form of Apartheid. Already the existence of a large part of the population forced to work at greatly reduced wages has significantly undercut the living standards of all American workers.

Fortunately, as this limited, but significant victory shows, these policies are being fought by a new and growing civil and immigrants rights movement, uniting native-born and immigrants. This movement is fighting, and winning, battles against not only the detentions, but the whole range of anti-immigrant attacks. An example of these victories is the recent success of Casa Freehold and the other groups, including our own, working with them in Freehold NJ in rolling back the attacks on immigrant day-laborers by the Township, real-estate developers and their allies.

As part of this ongoing fight, NJCRDC is working with other groups towards the complete abolition of the 1996 Illegal Immigration and Antiterrorism Acts, and the Patriot Act, the anti-immigrant and repressive laws underpinning the current attacks. As long as these laws remain in force, we are helping to prevent immigrants from becoming victims of them. As in the days when Abolitionists helped slaves escape the grasp of the Fugitive Slave acts, we and other organizations are working to help immigrants know and defend their rights.

In particular, we are working with Casa Freehold to set up as a pilot project in Freehold an Emergency Response System that will allow immigrants harassed by ICE, the police, their employers or other authorities to immediately seek advice and aid through a 24-hour Hotline. Since nearly all the immigrants in the area are Spanish-speaking, we are seeking Spanish-speaking volunteers to staff the hotline from their homes or cell-phones. This project is a continuation of the Emergency Response effort NJCRDC has been organizing over the past year. Those who want to volunteer can contact us at 732-780-9827. English is not required and we will provide training and Spanish-language information to all volunteers. We invite all, whatever their languages and skills, to join with us to defend the rights of all of us.