

MEDIA ADVISORY

Lawsuit Filed to Uncover Government Policies on Deportation Procedures for Recent Central American Refugees

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(San Francisco, CA)—Immigration organizations will file a lawsuit today in San Francisco to force the Obama Administration to release policy documents about its practice of fast-tracking the cases of recent Central American refugee families and children. The lawsuit, filed under the Freedom of Information Act, demands that the Department of Justice immediately release records describing its practice of placing the recent refugees' cases in expedited deportation proceedings in the nation's immigration courts.

The complaint alleges that the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which supervises the nation's immigration courts, failed to release records outlining federal government policies for placing Central American migrants on fast-tracked dockets. Travis Silva of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights stated, "Without this information, immigration attorneys lack the ability to advocate effectively for their clients, and the public cannot provide meaningful oversight of the fast-tracked hearing process."

The lawsuit follows recent efforts by the Obama Administration targeting Central American women and children refugees who have been through fast-tracked proceedings in home raids and other enforcement actions. News of the planned raids first broke on Christmas Eve and the raids began shortly after New Year's Day. The administration has deported most of the mothers and children arrested in these raids to El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and Guatemala, which have extremely high crime rates and unchecked gang and cartel violence. Twelve refugee-seeking families were granted emergency stays by the Board of Immigration Appeals after pro bono attorneys scrambled to assist them when they were incarcerated at the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. They have yet to be released.

"Our member attorneys represent many of the women and children who have faced unspeakable violence in Central America. The information we are seeking is critical to ensuring that their due process rights are protected. And now that the government is taking enforcement actions to remove these families, time is of the essence," said Betsy Lawrence, Director of Liaison for the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

“The need for the information we seek is underscored by the real-life consequences of the fast-tracked dockets,” said Ilyce Shugall, directing attorney of the Immigration Program at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA). “We have represented women and children who were ordered deported because they could not find a lawyer quickly enough.”

“The public deserves to know the policies by which the federal government is considering the asylum claims of recent Central American children and families, many of whom have fled horrible persecution abroad,” said Jayashri Srikantiah, director of the Stanford Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic, which represents (along with other counsel) the immigration organizations filing the lawsuit.

The organizations filing the FOIA lawsuit are: the American Immigration Lawyers Association; the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS) at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law; Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, and Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA). Attorney Thomas Burke of Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, the Stanford Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic, and attorneys at CGRS, LCCR, and CLSEPA are co-counsel in this lawsuit.

A copy of the complaint is available [here](#). The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

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