

U.S. Issues 10,000 Deportation Orders for Young Central Americans

01/03/2016



Data from the Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review indicate that, between July 2014 and Jan. 26, 2016, 8,912 repatriation orders for minors from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala were issued in absentia.

The aim of Immigration and Customs Enforcement since the beginning of the year has been to carry out those orders as quickly as possible and in that way send a message to Central American countries about the inevitable fate of those planning to enter the country illegally.

"Since a month ago when ICE started rounding up youngsters in the streets, Hispanic neighborhoods have suffered constant anguish and terror," Byron Martinez of the civil rights organization United We Stand, based in Gaston County, North Carolina, said.

In the last week of January, ICE agents began to arrest undocumented immigrants with a very specific profile: young Central Americans who arrived as minors but who are now over 18, according to the activists.

"ICE is undoubtedly waiting for them to become adults in order to arrest them – that is the pattern of every one of the young people who have been captured in Charlotte," said Ana Miriam Carpio of the Salvadoran Union, which has been helping families affected by the apprehensions.

"Our state has been a kind of laboratory for the way federal immigration agents in other states will deal with young Salvadorans, Hondurans and Guatemalans that come to this country unaccompanied," Martinez said.

Jose Hernandez Paris, executive director of the Latin American Coalition in Charlotte, said that at a meeting with ICE at which they pleaded with agents not to arrest young people at school bus stops or on their way to class, the officials always referred to the youths as "adults" and refused to call them "students."

“This city should not tolerate strategies that put minors in danger and isolate an entire community that has become an integral part of this city,” Hernandez Paris said, adding that between 15 and 20 high school students in Charlotte are in the sights of ICE for deportation.

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