



## Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

# Press Statement

**For Immediate Release**  
January 23, 2007

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## **President Bush Renews Call for Immigration Reform, Deports Hundreds in a “Theatrical Show of Force”**

### **CHIRLA Questions Timing and Necessity of Raids**

*This message is attributable to Angelica Salas, Executive Director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles. For more information, or to set up an interview, please contact Alvaro Huerta at 213.353.1789 or [ahuerta@chirla.org](mailto:ahuerta@chirla.org).*

During tonight’s State of the Union Address, the President is reaffirmed his commitment to comprehensive immigration reform. The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) welcomes the continued bi-partisan leadership of both the President and the new Congress, and we hope that 2007 will be the year when genuine immigration reform solutions take center stage. But will the President’s rhetoric pan out?

Thus far, the evidence is squarely against him. And the consequences are tragic.

In the days leading up to the President’s address to the nation, the Administration, through Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) has expanded its crack down on undocumented immigrants through its ill-advised Operation Return to Sender program. This cynical and highly-publicized assault on immigrant communities has led to the separation of thousands of families, will cost the nation untold millions in both wasted resources and in a significant losses to economic productivity, and will ultimately get us no closer to reasonable and forward-thinking answers to our current dilemma.

Just this last week in Los Angeles alone, ICE has arrested 761 people, justifying their sudden exuberance by casting mothers, fathers, and workers as somehow a “criminal element” that needs to be purged. We may never fully determine how many of those people suffered violations to their rights – rights guaranteed by the Constitution to everyone on American soil. These raids were nothing but a theatrical show of force to appease those of the President’s constituents who would rather throw money at a useless fence than invest in ESL and civics courses. Their timing, in the days leading up to tonight’s speech, only raises suspicions as to how much the President is willing to surrender to anti-immigrant intolerance.

How many more children have to lose their parents before we stand up as a nation and come up with a sensible and compassionate immigration system? How much further underground do we want to drive the millions of human beings whose lives and contributions too many so casually disregard?

Our nation has to consider the sheer *terror* that we have chosen to inflict on a segment of people within our society. Immigrants are terrorized by a fear that they, or someone that they love, will be deported. Children are frightened by the anxiety that their mother or father, or both, might not be able to pick them up from school one day. Meanwhile, many Americans are paralyzed by an illogical fear of people just like them – people who simply want to work and provide for their families, people who want to achieve the American Dream.

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There is no longer any doubt that our nation's immigration system is broken. But we have seen over and over again that wasteful enforcement and terrorizing raids are no solution. We call on the President and Congress to enact immigration reform that brings and keeps families together, protects all workers, provides a path to citizenship for all of the undocumented people in the country, and allows for the eventual citizenship of future immigrants and workers.

The President has delivered his State of the Union address. Now, working with the Congress, it is time to prove that our federal government has the political will to act. In the meantime, CHIRLA will continue to hold our nation's leaders accountable so that they develop effective solutions and drop the devastating tactics that tear up the fabric of our society.

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*The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) was formed in 1986 to advance the human and civil rights of immigrants and refugees in Los Angeles, promote harmonious multi-ethnic and multi-racial human relations and through coalition-building, advocacy, community education and organizing, empower immigrants and their allies to build a more just society.*