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All 14 Participants Freed From Jail After Non-Violent Civil Disobedience to Protest Arizona's SB 1070

Protestors Hail Action As A Victory and Call For Ongoing Resistance To Unjust Laws and criminalization of immigrant communities

LOS ANGELES – On Friday night, after more than 24 hours in jail, all 14 activists and community members who engaged in non-violent civil disobedience in protest of Arizona's recently enacted SB1070 and other federal, state, and local immigration enforcement laws, were freed on their own recognizance. The activists face at least one misdemeanor charge of failing to disperse and possibly other misdemeanor charges including resisting arrest. Their court date is scheduled for June 4, 2010. After being taken into custody, the 14 protestors refused to provide identification documents or their names as an act of resistance to Arizona's SB 1070's requirement that the police verify immigration status of anyone they "reasonably suspect" to be undocumented.

Activists say Thursday's action was successful in calling attention to the criminalization of immigrants in the U.S., and that there will be other local and national protests in coming weeks. "Being released from jail does not signify an end to this movement rooted in non violent civil disobedience, but signifies its birth," said Paulina

Gonzalez, one of the participants in Thursday's action. "As Dr. King said, it is our moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. By not providing our name or answering questions about our immigration status we did just that," added Gonzalez.

On Thursday more than a dozen activists were chained to each other, encircling the entrance to the facility where immigrants are processed for detainment and deportation. Those engaged in supporting the disobedience were joined by hundreds of community members and activists who protested for over five hours on Alameda Street, shutting down the Federal Detention Center, which included blocking incoming Department of Homeland Security detention buses from entering the building and three lanes of Downtown LA traffic with their bodies.

The activists sought to highlight the racist nature of immigration enforcement measures that terrorize immigrant communities through a for-profit regime being carried out through Arizona's SB1070, raids by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, and collaboration between ICE and local police and sheriffs in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, Costa Mesa, and in LA County jails.

The action includes a call for an immediate and unconditional regularization (legalization) of the millions of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., the immediate repeal of SB 1070, an end to ICE and police collaboration, immigration raids, detentions and deportations and the criminalization of communities of color.

Some facts about the U.S. Detention and Deportation system from the Detention Watch Network:

- Immigrants in detention include families, both undocumented and documented immigrants, many who have been in the US for years and are now facing exile; survivors of torture; asylum

- seekers; and other vulnerable groups including pregnant women, children, and individuals who are seriously ill without proper medication or care.
- Being in violation of immigration laws is not a crime. It is a civil violation for which immigrants go through a process to determine whether they have a right to stay in the United States. Immigrants detained during this process are in non-criminal custody. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the agency responsible for detaining immigrants.
 - Although DHS owns and operates its own detention centers, it also “buys” bed space from over 312 county and city prisons nationwide to hold the majority of those who are detained (over 67%). Immigrants detained in these local jails are intermixed with the local prison population.
 - As a result of this surge in detention and deportation, immigrants are suffering poor conditions and abuse in detention facilities across the country and families are being separated—often for life—while the private prison industry and county jailers are reaping huge profits.

The protesters cited Martin Luther King’s Letter from Birmingham Jail as their inspiration. In the letter the great Civil Rights leader said:

“It is our moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.”

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