



Dignity, Not Detention: Preserving Human Rights and Restoring Justice

The US immigration detention system is in deep crisis. In recent years it has expanded dramatically and at great cost to principles of universal human rights and the rule of law. Since 1994 the number of detention beds has grown from 5,000 to over 33,000 with more than 1.7 million individuals passing through the system since 2003. This dramatic growth in detention is indicative of the unjust immigration enforcement system in this country.

Immigrants are detained in a secretive network of over 350 federal, private, state prisons, and local jails, at an annual cost of \$1.7 billion to taxpayers. This crisis is not limited to the undocumented—long-term green-card holders with minor offenses, survivors of trafficking and domestic violence, and those fleeing persecution also are detained and deported by the thousands. Over eighty percent of detained immigrants go through the immigration system with no lawyer. Many are denied their fair day in court owing to mandatory and arbitrary detention laws and policies that severely limit judicial discretion in immigration cases. While detained, immigrants face horrific human rights abuses, including mistreatment by guards, solitary confinement, the denial of medical attention and limited or no access to their families, lawyers and the outside world. In many cases, these conditions have proven fatal: since 2003, a reported 107 people have died in immigration custody.

Last year ICE announced plans to reform the immigration detention system, yet to date, there is little evidence of change. DHS Secretary Napolitano has publicly reaffirmed the agency's intention to expand a punitive enforcement system which already lacks oversight and accountability. DWN members are committed to opposing any expansion of the enforcement regime and shifting the national debate in support of a system based in civil administrative process which ensures the due process and human rights of all people.

This year, Detention Watch Network will launch the "**Dignity Not Detention**" campaign to stop the expansion of detention nationally. DWN members will support organizing efforts in Arizona, Georgia and Texas to stop local detention expansion, underscore the impact of national detention policy on local communities, and highlight the human rights crisis resulting from detention growth. DWN members will also engage in a complementary national advocacy strategy towards four goals:

- 1) Reduce detention spending by the Obama Administration
- 2) Demand the use of secure release options as a meaningful alternative to detention,
- 3) Restore due process to immigration laws, and
- 4) End expansion of enforcement programs (i.e. ICE ACCESS) that are contributing to the growth of the detention system.

As Americans, we have a **responsibility** to uphold our core values: **dignity, human rights, and due process** of law -- principles that are fundamental to a democracy. All people, regardless of race or country of origin, deserve **fair and equal treatment by the government**. Yet, the government has instead created a climate of fear which has led to the systematic violation of basic human rights and the denial of due process.

How You Can Get Involved:

- Sign-on to the campaign – Sign-on at www.dignitynotdetention.org and spread the word by informing your networks and constituents about the campaign.
- Campaign for Reform – Visit your local congressional representatives and ICE offices, send in complaints to ICE/DHS, and participate in national action alerts and mobilizations.
- Join a Local campaign – If you live in Arizona, Georgia or Texas please contact us and we will connect you to the local campaign in your region.
- Start a campaign in your community – If your community is facing detention expansion we would love to support your work, please contact us.

Dignity Not Detention is a campaign of the Detention Watch Network. For more information please go to www.dignitynotdetention.org or email: campaign@detentionwatchnetwork.org