



# Interfaith Worker Justice



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## **Stop Workplace Raids Now** **Policy Statement of the Board of Directors, Interfaith Worker Justice**

Interfaith Worker Justice categorically opposes all immigration raids at workplaces across the United States. These raids target racial and ethnic groups that appear to be "foreign" and are blatantly discriminatory; tear families apart, often leaving children without parents or caregivers; impoverish entire communities; undermine basic civil liberties; deter workers from reporting serious workplace abuses, including health and safety violations and theft of wages by unscrupulous employers; and do nothing to fix a broken immigration system.

We understand that many people of good will are troubled about the issue of immigration, given the problems native-born workers face in today's workplace, including job insecurity and a downward push on wages and benefits. Interfaith Worker Justice is dedicated to organizing the religious community to support the rights of all workers, particularly those earning low wages. When our government actively generates fear and havoc among immigrant workers and their families, fuels the fires of bigotry and turns groups of workers against each other based on race, ethnicity and immigration status, we are all diminished.

As people of faith, we recognize and honor the social and economic contributions made by immigrant workers, regardless of their national origin or immigration status. In order to promote human dignity, the civil and workplace rights of all workers must be upheld. From placing food on our tables, making our clothes, or caring for our sick, immigrant workers provide many of our daily needs. While we rely on their work, we allow immigrant workers to be denied basic rights because of their legal status. While many live and work without legal documentation—there are an estimated 12 million undocumented people in the US—legal residents and naturalized citizens also experience discrimination. We have even witnessed some employers using threats and intimidation to undermine union organizing efforts by undocumented workers.

Workplace raids are not carried out to apprehend identified law breakers, as is sometimes claimed by the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE). ICE agents, often wielding assault rifles, sweep into workplaces and detain hundreds of employees—nearly 600 at a recent raid in Mississippi alone. These raids can only be seen as attempts to terrorize immigrant communities and to score political points. The raids violate basic human rights and offend deeply held American and faith values, such as family unity, welcoming immigrants, and the value of work.

It is time for these raids to stop. Interfaith Worker Justice condemns all workplace immigration raids, and calls for an immediate moratorium on all such raids.

IWJ calls on Congress and the President to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Comprehensive immigration reform must aim to provide full and equal protections of employment and labor laws, civil liberties and civil rights for all workers in the U.S. Reform should work to remove economic incentives for the exploitation of immigrant labor and strengthen requirements to fairly consider hiring native-born workers. Permanent status must be favored over temporary status, and families must be valued and allowed to remain intact.

*Adopted September 2008*