



**One Hundred Fourteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515**

January 13, 2016

The Honorable Jeh C. Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

As Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, we are writing to express our great concern about the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) recent enforcement operations targeting families from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. We were troubled to hear that within days of reporting DHS' end-of-year immigration enforcement statistics that reflect "[the]Department's increased focus on prioritizing convicted criminals and threats to public safety, border security and national security,"¹ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began operations to apprehend and remove 121 women and children who, according to DHS' own risk methodology, appear to pose no security or public safety risk to the United States.²

Given the Department's limited budgetary resources and the increased interest among Americans in the timely removal of dangerous convicted criminal aliens, we believe that there are serious questions about whether these recent immigration operations are the best use of ICE's limited immigration enforcement resources. Moreover, we continue to be troubled by reports that families and others in immigration proceedings are being denied access to counsel, particularly given the violent and dangerous situations many of these vulnerable individuals are fleeing and the dire consequences many families face if they are returned to their home countries. We strongly believe that DHS and its Federal partners must ensure that these families receive due process and, ultimately, protection if they are entitled under our laws.

While we appreciate that the Department is currently working with the Department of Health and Human Services to help ensure the necessary resources are in place to avoid a humanitarian crisis like the one we witnessed in 2014, more must be done to ensure that this population of undocumented aliens receive fair and just treatment. Going forward, we urge DHS to support

¹ DHS Press Release entitled "DHS Releases End of Fiscal Year 2015 Statistics, dated December 22, 2015 at <http://www.dhs.gov/news/2015/12/22/dhs-releases-end-fiscal-year-2015-statistics>.

² "U.S. Authorities begin raids, taking 121 illegal immigrants into custody over the weekend," by Lisa Rein, Washington Post, published January 4, 2016.

the establishment of a regional solution that would provide protection to those with legitimate claims, whether from the U.S. or others in the region.

We want to continue to work with you on ways to respond to the flow of families and children to this country from Central America in a way that upholds our values as a Nation of immigrants and a people with a history of providing refugee to those fleeing troubled circumstances. To that end, we are requesting a meeting with our Committee Members to discuss the DHS' path forward.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any further questions and to schedule the Member meeting, please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight at 6-2616.

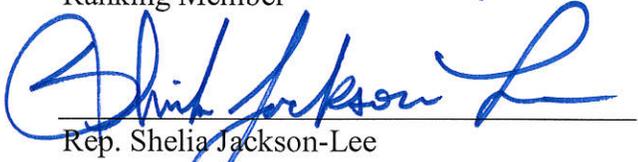
Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member



Rep. Loretta Sanchez



Rep. Shelia Jackson-Lee



Rep. James R. Langevin



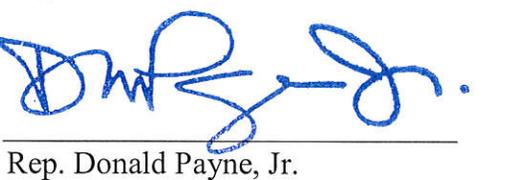
Rep. Brian Higgins



Rep. Cedric L. Richmond



Rep. William R. Keating



Rep. Donald Payne, Jr.



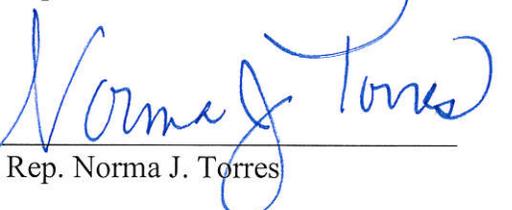
Rep. Filemon Vela



Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman



Rep. Kathleen M. Rice



Rep. Norma J. Torres