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PRESS RELEASE

114 U.S. CITIZENS AND LAWFUL RESIDENTS FILE DAMAGE CLAIMS FOLLOWING LOS ANGELES ICE FACTORY RAID

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Los Angeles, CA –One hundred and fourteen (114) United States citizens and lawful permanent residents today filed claims for damages with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) alleging that they were illegally detained and harassed during a large-scale ICE immigration raid at Micro Solutions Enterprises in Los Angeles on February 7, 2008.

The raid was the largest recent workplace operation by ICE agents searching for undocumented workers. Micro Solutions employs about 800 workers, 138 of whom were arrested during the raid. Almost all of those workers were released on bonds or their own recognizance and are fighting deportation in hearings before Immigration Judges expected to last at least one year.

Micro Solutions is a global manufacturer of remanufactured imaging supplies. Lawyers for the workers bringing the claims argue that MSE is a high-tech manufacturer whose employees make well above the minimum wage and are offered a range of benefits, far from the type of labor law-violating “sweatshop” top ICE officials have claimed are targeted for raids.

Each claimant seeks five thousand dollars (\$5,000) in compensation for the alleged detention that took place during the MSE raid. This is believed to be the first time that a group of U.S. citizens and lawful residents claiming they were illegally detained during an ICE workplace raid have brought claims for damages against the government. If the claims are successful, this strategy could force Secretary Chertoff and ICE chief Myers to reassess how raids are conducted.

In a letter dated yesterday addressed to Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff and ICE Assistant Secretary Julie Myers, the Los Angeles-based Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law wrote:

“Despite the fact that labor unions, workers, and others have previously brought to your attention the blatantly unconstitutional use of ‘group detentions’ during ICE workplace raids, you have failed to in any way to reassess your operations, provide better training for your agents, or issue clear instructions to cease and desist from unlawful “group detentions” during ICE operations.”

Maria Elena Durazo, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, said – “ICE raids that result in the temporary detention of all workers will not be tolerated. Workers do not leave their rights at the work place gate. They are entitled to be treated in full compliance with the law and the United States constitution. The ICE practice of detaining all workers during raids regardless whether they have done anything wrong is appalling and inexcusable. The practice of separating families and deporting longtime resident workers is irrational, especially given that all presidential candidates support comprehensive immigration reform that hopefully will soon offer these workers a path to citizenship.”

Fabian Nunez, Speaker of the California Assembly, said – “I am opposed to these raids and have joined other California elected officials in recently informing Secretary Chertoff of our strong disagreement with the manner in which these workplace operations are conducted. These raids accomplish nothing since employers immediately rehire new workers and end up with the same number of workers using unauthorized identity documents despite full compliance by employers with federal employee-verification rules. Raiding companies that employ large numbers of US citizens and pay well above the minimum wage makes no sense. The country needs

comprehensive immigration reform, not arbitrary random workplace raids, particularly against employers who are not exploiting their workers.”

Angelica Salas, Executive Director Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles said – “The result of these raids is always the same: torn apart families, injured businesses, injured workers, and debilitated communities. We cannot ignore the truth that violating the civil rights of our very own citizens, legal permanent residents, or immigrants in process is just plain wrong.”

Peter Schey, President of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law and lead counsel for the claimants, said “During the raid, Micro Solutions was sealed off and effectively locked down by armed ICE agents. These armed government agents issued orders directing everyone in the building where to go, where to stand, and where to line up. Those detained were not permitted to use their cell phones. This mass detention of U.S. citizens and lawful residents took place without a warrant or probable cause to believe every worker had violated the law and was therefore subject to temporary detention.”

One U.S. citizen claimant believed she was “the victim[] of a criminal or terrorist activity” when armed ICE agents burst into the business and started yelling at everyone about where to go and where to line up. The claimant was working in her cubicle when she heard voices yelling, “Everyone needs to come with us.” She stood up and saw numerous armed individuals who had not identified themselves. She did not know what “ICE” stood for, and her “immediate reaction was fear.”

One U.S. citizen claimant reports that “ICE agents with guns stormed into the building. The agents yelled at us to stop whatever we were doing, and not to touch anything. The agents did not tell us who they were, or what was going on. They then ordered us to stand up and to go out into the hallway and line up against the wall. They would not let us gather our personal possessions before lining up ... it was strictly prohibited to use cell phones ... ICE agents patrolled the entire building ... I had never seen so many law enforcement officers in one place before. It was very scary because there were so many agents with guns and I still had no idea why I was being detained.”

Under federal law the government has six (6) months to resolve these claims. If these claims are not satisfactorily resolved during the next six months, the one hundred and fourteen U.S. citizen and lawful permanent resident claimants will then be authorized to prosecute their claims for compensation against the government in the federal courts.

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