

U.S. Takes Over 100 Undocumented Immigrants into Custody



Washington, January 5 (RHC)-- U.S. authorities have taken 121 people into custody as part of efforts to deport Central American families who had immigrated to the United States illegally.

The detentions of adults and children, who entered the U.S. illegally after May 2014, took place primarily in Texas, Georgia and North Carolina, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said on Monday.

"This should come as no surprise. I have said publicly for months that individuals who constitute enforcement priorities, including families and unaccompanied children, will be removed," Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said in a statement.

The large-scale campaign is carried out by agents with the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a federal law enforcement agency under the DHS.

The White House on Monday declined to comment on specifics of the weekend apprehensions by the American immigration authorities.

"The enforcement priorities laid out by the administration are concentrating our efforts to deport felons, not families, and to prioritize the case of recent border crossers," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said at a news briefing.

The targeted adults and children had been ordered to be removed by an immigration court and exhausted legal remedies and asylum claims. The majority of the families will be taken to family residential centers before they fly back to their home countries.

"These raids are a scare tactic to deter other families fleeing violence in Central America from coming to the United States," said Cecillia Wang, director of the immigrants' Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union.

Obama administration officials said in late December that they would step up deportations of those who had already been ordered to leave the country. Immigrant advocates have questioned prioritizing nonviolent migrants for deportation and whether the facilities that hold them are suitable for minors.

Over 100,000 families have entered the U.S. through its border with Mexico since 2014 to escape the violence gripping El Salvador and Honduras in Central America.

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