

Coalition rips ICE's raids as unfair & illegal

AN ANTI-RAIDS COALITION in New York has put out a document denouncing the excessive force and flagrant violation of rights that have become trademarks of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids against undocumented immigrants.

"They have a cowboy mentality — they feel they can do whatever they want," said Monami Maulik, founder of DRUM (Desis Rising Up and Moving), a group that organizes low-income South Asian immigrants, and a member of the coalition.

The document, released on Thursday, does not mince words.

"As a broad alliance of community, faith-based and legal organizations, we stand in strong opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's recent alarming increase in conducting immigration raids across the country, which have already led to the breaking up

of thousands of families," it reads in part.

"We have not been safe from this racist targeting of communities here in New York City, which many see as friendly to immigrants in comparison to other localities."

Other coalition members are the Center for Constitutional Rights, Families for Freedom, American Friends Service Committee, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and New York New Sanctuary Coalition.

In truth, New York has been a less threatening place than others in the country, but ICE also has cast its shad-

ow over immigrant communities here.

On Oct. 14, along Roosevelt Ave. in Jackson Heights, Queens, more than 100 immigrants were arrested as part of a criminal investigation, led by the NYPD, of document falsifiers. Yet only 41 were charged. The others were innocent bystanders, called "collateral arrests" by ICE.

"I saw agents with green jackets that said ICE coming out of cars that were not police cars," said a witness who asked not to be identified. "They arrested a couple that was just walking by, and a couple leaving a bank."

Home raids also are on the rise. Witnesses tell of armed ICE agents who, seeking out people with orders of deportation or minor criminal records, "storm into homes without warrants, interrogate people, conduct unauthorized searches and take parents away from frightened children."

People who happen to be in those homes, even if they have no orders of deportation or criminal records, also are arrested.

"What we are most concerned about is that they arrested bystanders," Maulik said. "We have been holding meetings with the NYPD to see what their position is in terms of the raids."

ACCORDING to the document, ICE uses "criminal investigation" as a pretext to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants "under circumstances that clearly demonstrate racial profiling."

An ICE spokesperson in Washington, Michael Kegan, denies it.

"All our operations are conducted professionally and lawfully," he said. "Allegations that we arrest parents and leave children alone are not true. We make sure that the child is with an adult and in a safe environment."

The anti-raids coalition does not buy it and is urging the NYPD not to cooperate with ICE. It is also calling on elected officials "to stand up for New Yorkers, nearly half of whom come from immigrant families."

World Vision, concerned about the Dominican victims of Tropical Storm Noel, has set up four ways to help them:

1. Call (866) 730-3915.
2. Give online: www.worldvision.org/newyork.
3. Send a check: 143 W. 29th St., fourth floor, New York, N.Y. 10001. Please write "Dominican Republic Relief" on the check or envelope.
4. Go to the bank: Account: "World Vision Inc. Dominican Republic Relief Fund," Bank of America, 4061 Broadway (at W. 171st St.), Manhattan. aruiz@nydailynews.com

