



NASHVILLE

## ‘We are human beings’: The faces and stories of families impacted by ICE activity in Nashville

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WKRN) — Dozens of families gathered at the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition Office (TIRRC), sharing emotional stories of how recent ICE operations have torn their loved ones away.

This weekend, [THP, in collaboration with ICE](#), detained 94 people during a so-called ‘Safety Operation.’ Among them, officials with ICE say they were a convicted child sex predator, a known Tren De Aragua gang member, and an MS-13 Gang Member wanted for aggravated murder out of El Salvador.

But advocates on Thursday said not every case fits that narrative.

Ingrid Martinez said her mother was one of those detained. On Thursday, she stood in her place and described her mom as a churchgoer and devoted grandmother, not a criminal.

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“It’s not fair because they are only arresting them and getting them because of their color and because they are Hispanics,” a family member of a detainee, Ingrid Martinez, said. “My mom isn’t a criminal. My mom, she serves at church, she takes care of her grandkids, so I don’t know how she can be seen as a criminal.”

Written testimony from Patricia, who moved to Nashville in 1992, shared how her family is now living in fear and uncertainty after their loved one was also taken away.

“I would like you to think about the families that are separated who are in pain, anguish, and despair,” the letter from Patricia, read by Luis Mata, said. “We are human beings like everyone else. Don’t let them lie to you and make you think they are only arresting criminals. They are arresting anyone simply based on who they are and what they look like.”

The letter continues, “The situation can be compared to a tornado that lifts up and destroys everything in its path.”

Also in the room were families facing similar heartbreak.

[TIRRC](#) said it has handled over 850 calls on its legal hotline in the last five days, 75% of which were related to this week’s enforcement activity.

Officials with TIRRC explained that they are still waiting for more information, with only 62 detainees identified.

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“These stories are just a small glimpse into the devastation that families across our community have experienced in the last four days,” Executive Director for TIRRC, Lisa Sherman Luna, expressed. “As we speak we are getting reports of ICE roaming the streets, going up to children at a bus stop and asking them about their parents’ immigration status, we’ve heard of a father on the way home from buying birthday decorations for his son’s birthday party, getting picked up and is now in detention.”

According to a THP press release, the agency’s role in the joint operation is to observe driving behavior and conduct lawful stops based on violations of Tennessee traffic laws.

Preliminary results released by the THP resulted in 468 stops for observed traffic violations. These included:

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- Hazardous Moving Violations
- 3 DUI arrests
- 1 child endangerment arrest
- 1 felony evading arrest
- 2 drug arrests
- 5 felony wanted persons

The press release goes on to say THP’s role is to “enforce Tennessee traffic laws fairly and consistently, and our troopers continue to make lawful stops, based solely on traffic infractions, in an effort to keep Tennesseans safe. We do not enter neighborhoods or stop vehicles based on who someone is—we stop based on what they do behind the wheel.”

If this incident affected you or a family member, TIRRC urges you to call its resource line at **615-414-1030** for legal information and resources. The coalition also [shared this link](#) to offer a review of constitutional rights when interacting with law enforcement or ICE.

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