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ICE TERRORIZING IMMIGRANT WORKERS BECAUSE OF FAILED U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY

(Washington, D.C.) - United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) members working in Swift and Company meatpacking plants are reporting that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents marched into plants Tuesday morning with military weapons, herding, segregating, and terrorizing workers. Plants and plant gates were locked down.

"The display of force by ICE agents is totally outrageous," said Mark Lauritsen, International Vice President and Director of the Food Processing, Packing, and Manufacturing division of the UFCW. "We believe they are victims of wholesale violations of worker rights. In effect, ICE is criminalizing people for going to work."

Families have been ripped apart leaving traumatized children stranded at school waiting to be picked up. In some cases, their parents are being transported to detention centers in distant cities and denied the opportunity to call anyone to make arrangements for their children. Workers at the Swift plant in Grand Island, Neb., have been bussed to Camp Dodge, Iowa, six hours away from their families, with no guarantee of return transportation.

Workers at the Greeley Colo., plant reported that gun shots were fired. Representatives and attorneys with the UFCW, who have standing to represent these workers, have been denied access to the detained workers.

"The workers caught in this vice are victims of a failed immigration system. It's time for the federal government to stop victimizing workers and reform our immigration system," said Lauritsen. "The last do-nothing Congress failed to produce its promised immigration reform before recess. The result is that children have been orphaned, left to sleep in strange beds and uncertain about their holiday or their future. Worksite raids with armed agents are not the answer to the nationwide call for immigration reform. America deserves a humane, systematic and comprehensive immigration policy immediately."

UFCW local unions are working tirelessly to contact family members to protect minor children. Union representatives have been denied access to the facilities to represent workers. UFCW local unions are putting in place a system to aid the families, contacting relatives of children, setting up aid funds to supply holiday gifts and whatever long-term assistance they may need.

The UFCW represents approximately 10,000 workers at the five Swift and Company plants.

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The UFCW represents 1.4 million workers, 250,000 in the meatpacking and poultry industries. UFCW members also work in the health care, garment, chemical, distillery and retail industries.