

Latino Residents Claim Raids Unlawful



By Alan Wang

Jan. 29 - KGO - In the East Bay, complaints that federal customs agents are using deceitful tactics led to a community forum at St. Mark's Catholic Church in Richmond. The new mayor of Richmond pledged her support to the city's nearly 50,000 Latino residents -- even if they're undocumented.

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Maria Ramirez admitted her sons are undocumented. But they were not listed on the warrant presented by Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Georgia Santa Maria says her brothers were seized during an ICE raid at work, and now customs will not tell her exactly where they are.

Ruben Gonzales, Richmond residents: "They did not provide any warrants. They broke the door."

An immigration attorney told them ICE was in violation of the law. And even though many of those who testified at the forum are here illegally, they took the risk knowing that local officials are now trying to protect them.

Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, Richmond: "I'm here to give my solidarity and to give my support to the hundreds and thousands of families that in recent weeks have lived in a state of terror."

Even the Richmond police department says they were not pleased with the way ICE agents were conducting their operations.

Captain Alec Griffin, Richmond police department: "And if people are afraid to answer their door or call police, it presents a problem for all of us."

City leaders from San Pablo and Pinole say many of their residents also have the same complaints.

Richmond police say they encouraged ICE representatives to attend the meeting, but they did not show up.

Captain Alec Griffin, Richmond police department: "We have a policy not to call immigration or to go to somebody's house purely for immigration issues."

Now the city of Richmond, the school district, the police department, and other local politicians are promising to write letters to U.S. Customs officials arguing that all people in the U.S. --

documented or undocumented -- are protected by the fourth and fifth amendments.

Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, Richmond: "And continue to tell me what you need me to do."

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