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Legal Group Files Public Records Request to Expose Civil Rights Violations in Immigration and Customs' Enforcement Program Operation Border Guardian

Today, the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (NIPNLG) filed a Freedom of Information Act request on Operation Border Guardian, an Immigration and Customs (ICE) enforcement and detention program targeting Central American teenagers for deportation since January 2016.

Since January, there has been widespread public attention and Congressional concern regarding the devastating impact of Operation Border Guardian on communities, families and schools particularly in North Carolina and Georgia. A scathing [New York Times editorial](#) criticized ICE's implementation of the program, stating "...[I]CE has been running amok, raiding homes and public spaces in search of deportable youths. In North Carolina and Georgia, where organized advocacy is sparse, the dragnet has been unusually aggressive. Agents seized students at home and on their way to school."

"Operation Border Guardian is a raids program operating without accountability or transparency. The purpose of this FOIA is to uncover information that exposes the civil rights violations committed during the operation," said Associate Director **Paromita Shah**. "The community deserves to know the rationale driving ICE's decision to carry out these operations that have occurred mostly in the South. To date, it looks like ICE has a blanket policy of denying or ignoring requests for release on behalf of these immigrant youth from attorneys, Congressional offices, teachers, families and community organizations. We want to know where that is coming from."

Many of the youths apprehended through Operation Border Guardian sought refuge in the United States after fleeing gang and state violence. In the cases of eight youths detained in Stewart and Irwin Detention Facilities, community groups in Georgia and North Carolina such as Alerta Migratoria and Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR) have [repeatedly called for the release of these teenagers](#) so they could pursue their asylum cases in consultation with their attorneys.

"DHS must suspend Operation Border Guardian and related raids and release critical information about the program so that the public can fully investigate these raids which have so devastated communities," said **Julie Mao**, NIPNLG's Enforcement Fellow. "It should be heeding the calls of the public to release these immigrant youth back to their homes and schools, rather than leaving to languish in jails for months far away from counsel and community."