

PRESS STATEMENT

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Instead of Flowers, Deportation and Hardship for New York Mothers and Families Anti-Violence Advocates Deliver Message to NYC to End “Secure Communities”

May 14, 2012 (NY, NY) – In the spirit of Mother’s Day, advocates for immigrant survivors of family and intimate partner violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, and homophobic and transphobic violence, are calling on the Mayor and the New York Police Department to honor immigrant families, whether biological or chosen, by refusing to participate in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) disastrous “Secure Communities” (S-Comm) program. Under the program, the police share the fingerprints of every person booked with immigration enforcement. ICE is activating the program throughout New York on May 15, despite community concerns and objections from elected officials and Governor Cuomo, who suspended S-Comm in New York last June. Anti-violence advocates stand firm with the growing number of organizations that have been working to halt ICE’s mass deportation agenda and to bring attention to how S-Comm fuels racial profiling, mistrust in police, and unfair deportations.

In a letter to be delivered to the New York City Council, the Mayor, and the NYPD on Monday, organizations that provide services for thousands of immigrants who have survived intimate partner violence, human trafficking, and homophobic and transphobic violence will explain how S-Comm will undermine the decades of work advocates have done to increase protections for these vulnerable communities. Advocates sent Governor Cuomo a [letter](#) outlining key concerns a year ago last May just weeks before he announced S-Comm’s suspension in New York State.

By participating in S-Comm, New York is helping to perpetuate the cycle of abuse against victims. Abusers and traffickers commonly threaten their victims with false arrests and deportation, and S-Comm would effectuate this threat. Furthermore, survivors are often entangled in the criminal justice system due to the complicated nature of abusive interpersonal relationships. The program will deter immigrant community members from participating in police investigations, particularly in intimate partner violence situations where the arrest of both parties is a common occurrence.

“If the NYPD offers ICE access to police facilities, it’s our obligation to inform non-citizen survivors that the risk of calling the police also comes with the risk of deportation.” said Suha Dabbousseh, Policy Advocate at SAKHI for South Asian Women. “S-Comm undermines our work to stop interpersonal violence among already marginalized non-citizen communities, as even those who are severely abused will not reach out to the police for help. The NYPD is not required to and should not turn over people to ICE—the safety of our communities depends on it.”

Parents whose partners have been deported face a heavy economic and emotional toll in trying to keep their families together. In order to keep a partner out of what many see to be an unjust deportation system, many victims of intimate partner violence will allow abuse to escalate. According to Cecilia Gastón, Executive Director of Violence Intervention Program, Inc., “We have worked for years to develop more awareness amongst the police about the best practices to assist survivors of violence. S-Comm will undo the progress we have made because survivors will be afraid they may be deported if they call the police. Not being able to tell immigrant survivors they have the option of calling the police is a very scary prospect. The Mayor and the NYPD cannot allow S-Comm and the threat of deportation to stand in the way of our communities’ safety.”

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