

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

November 5, 2007

Contact: Melissa Williams
Public Affairs & Media Relations Officer
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
(202) 635-5810
mwilliams@cliniclegal.org

CLINIC URGES DHS TO SUSPEND IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT
DURING RELIEF EFFORTS

Washington, DC – The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) urges the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to suspend its immigration enforcement measures in the wake of natural or man-made disasters. During such disasters and national emergencies, DHS should announce a relaxation of immigration enforcement to encourage all residents to participate in government relief efforts and to access basic services. Such participation is essential to the survival of individuals and to the protection of the public at large.

CLINIC applauds the heroism of the countless first responders, firefighters, relief workers and volunteers who provided assistance to victims of the recent Southern California wild fires. However, CLINIC is concerned by troubling reports¹ from relief workers that immigrants have been denied and discouraged from receiving emergency services and, in at least one reported case, placed in deportation proceedings.

- MORE -

¹“ Firestorm: Treatment of Vulnerable Populations During the San Diego Fires” compiled by the American Civil Liberties Union of San Diego, Justice Overcoming Boundaries and the San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium.

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a subsidiary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the nation’s largest network of charitable immigration services with 156 affiliates in 260 field offices around the country. CLINIC advocates for transparent, fair and generous immigration policies.

www.cliniclegal.org

According to CLINIC Executive Director Donald Kerwin, “It is cruel and poor public policy to discourage non-citizens from accessing vital services during times of emergency. Public safety, health and recovery should be the priority.”

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, CLINIC called upon DHS to adopt a policy to separate its immigration enforcement activities from its humanitarian and relief activities. To date, DHS has failed to implement or publicly announce such a policy. Reports from the recent Southern California recovery efforts further illustrate the need for one.

“The lack of a clear policy fosters an atmosphere of fear that is counterproductive to government relief and recovery efforts. During times of national emergencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks, all residents must feel assured that they can seek relief services. Policies that fail to promote full participation undermine our nation’s security and best interests,” said Kerwin.

#

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), a subsidiary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is the nation’s largest network of charitable immigration services with 156 affiliates in 260 field offices around the country. CLINIC advocates for transparent, fair and generous immigration policies.

www.cliniclegal.org