Asian Americans Advancing Justice Condemns AG Sessions’ Plans toProsecute Undocumented Immigrants and Target Humanitarian Workers

Groups urge Congress to stand up as a check against this extreme anti-immigrant agenda

Norcross, GA, April 13, 2017 — Attorney General Jeff Sessions yesterday released a memo directing federal prosecutors to prioritize the prosecution of immigration status-related “crimes,” including an increase in felony charges for immigration status violations. The memo also prioritizes prosecution of people for transporting or harboring undocumented immigrants.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice, an affiliation of five civil rights organizations,condemns this memorandum in the following statement.

“The administration’s recently announced policy of prosecuting people for entry into the U.S. without permission is cruel and dangerous. Separating families does not seem to be enough for this administration. Now they want to throw mothers and fathers in prison who are crossing the border to flee harsh, unsafe, economic conditions—seeking safety for their children and the right to put food on the table. Undocumented immigrants are human beings who seek safety, work, and a better life.

Sessions’ policy falsely paints every undocumented immigrant as a threat when facts clearly do not support this notion. It’s shameful that we must remind Attorney General Sessions and President Trump that immigrants, both with and without papers, are the bedrock of our nation.

Furthermore, prioritizing prosecutions for harboring or transporting of undocumented immigrants appears to be aimed at humanitarian workers and other “good Samaritans” to deter them from assisting undocumented immigrants in any way, such as taking someone to the hospital or treating someone in an emergency situation.

Targeting border crossers for criminal prosecution will inevitably sweep up asylum-seekers fleeing violence and persecution and further deter victims of trafficking and abuse from coming forward for fear of criminal prosecution. The mass prosecution and deportation efforts of this administration are unconscionable, shameful actions that are reminiscent of Japanese incarceration when people of Japanese descent were targeted based on their nationality, forcibly removed from their homes, and imprisoned.

The rhetoric and policies of today are eerily similar to past efforts to scapegoat immigrants. The administration appears intent on persecuting immigrants and determined to heighten anti-immigrant hysteria at the expense of other, more pressing issues facing our nation.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice urges Congress to stand up as a check against this extreme anti-immigrant agenda. Asian Americans Advancing Justice also supports the passage of state and local policies that disentangle state and local law enforcement from deporting community members.

Senators and Members of Congress will have an opportunity to vote on the immigration enforcement budget in a couple of weeks. We urge them to deny the Administration any additional funds for their anti-immigrant agenda.”
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta (formerly Asian American Legal Advocacy Center or AALAC) is the first non-profit law center dedicated to Asian immigrants and refugees (“Asian Americans”) in the Southeast.

Our goal is to engage, educate and empower under-represented Asian Americans to greater civic participation.

We are one of five independent organizations that make up the national Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Together with our affiliates in Chicago, DC, Los Angeles and San Francisco, we bring more than 100 years of collective experience in addressing the civil rights issues faced by Asian Americans and other vulnerable and underserved communities. Visit www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org.