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AFT News Release

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Contact:
Janet Bass
202-879-4554
jbass@aft.org
www.aft.org

AFT Leaders Condemn Raids Targeting Refugee Women and Children

WASHINGTON—After news broke that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement plans a 30-day “surge” in raids targeting women and children fleeing from violence in Latin America, American Federation of Teachers leaders released the following statements:

“We should be better than this,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “In 2014, President Obama instructed ICE to focus its efforts where they belong: on deporting dangerous criminals who have crossed our borders illegally. Both Democratic presidential candidates have condemned these inhumane raids that target women and children fleeing from unspeakable violence and exploitation in Latin America. These refugees represent an opportunity for America to live up to the promise inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. Our members have worked hard every day to lift the lamp of freedom and light the way for these families since their arrival in our schools and our communities. We urge President Obama to do the same.”

“Targeting women and children is as disgusting as it is wrong,” said Mary Cathryn Ricker, AFT executive vice president and leader of the AFT’s Latino Issues Task Force. “It is especially infuriating to educators and school staff. Our members and our communities have poured our hearts and souls into welcoming refugee children to our schools and providing a safe place for their families. Raids and deportation will not just disrupt the lives of the targeted students, they will cause pain and fear for their classmates, and destabilize the schools and communities that have worked so hard to welcome them. This tragic decision aligns President Obama more closely with the anti-immigrant vitriol contaminating our national conversation than with his own stated policies.”

“It is heart-wrenching that President Obama—who is a family man—would think of deporting children and mothers from the safe haven they have sought here in America,” said Catalina Fortino, vice president of New York State United Teachers and a member of the AFT’s Latino Issues Task Force. “Those of us who sought, and found, freedom and opportunity in America are astounded by this turn. These raids attack the very essence of who we are as a people. Our members create safe learning communities for our children and youth that are welcoming to families. We have opened our doors and our hearts to students fleeing unbearable conditions, telling them through word and deed, ‘You matter.’ These cruel raids will undo that effort. Worse still, this will literally tear families apart, traumatize the communities that have welcomed these refugees and spit in the face of America’s values.”

Follow AFT President Randi Weingarten: <http://twitter.com/rweingarten>

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of 1.6 million professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Loretta Johnson
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mary Cathryn Ricker
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT • 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W. • Washington, DC 20001 • T: 202-879-4458 • F: 202-879-4580 • www.aft.org

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