



**Coalición de Derechos Humanos
Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras
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For Immediate Release

**Press Conference
Violence on the Border**
Wednesday, February 25, 2004
Sam Lena Library
(1607 S. 6th Avenue)
12:00 noon

The Coalición de Derechos Humanos/Alianza Indígena Sin Fronteras denounces the latest incidents of violence on the U.S.-México border. These incidents are directly related to the failed border policies which have plagued border communities since the 1990s.

Within the last few months, there have been events reported regarding Border Patrol agents' involvement in incidents of alleged corruption, physical abuse, sexual assault, and fatal shootings. Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security seeks to spend more taxpayer dollars in a program designed to return migrants "closer to their homes." This policy continues to ignore any meaningful solution to the migration issue while increasing the suffering of migrant workers and their families.

The anti-immigrant fervor which is evident in many of the Department of Homeland Security's policies and plans has created fear, xenophobia, and division in communities. These strategies have targeted not only migrants, but have victimized permanent residents and U.S. citizens alike. Agents and officials have behaved with impunity, leaving border communities with no recourse to protect the Constitutional and human rights. This continued lack of accountability to our communities must be addressed immediately.

In the executive summary of a recent report, the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights states that: "since immigration enforcement and services were placed within the new Department of Homeland Security...abusive and discriminatory immigration enforcement is becoming even more entrenched, seriously jeopardizing community safety and compromising access to services." Similar findings are echoed by numerous human rights organizations on a national level.

These incidents serve to highlight the magnitude of the failure of border enforcement strategies and policies. Increased militarization has forced communities to live in a state of occupation, under constant scrutiny and suspicion. It has routed migrants through dangerous terrain, making them vulnerable to death, dangerous smuggling networks, and vigilante groups that have emerged in the border region.

Until the root causes of migration and displacement are addressed, border communities will continue to suffer the pains of injustice and death. We demand economic policies that will effectively resolve problems of displacement, unemployment, and forced migration. We demand border policies that do not risk the lives of peoples whose only "crime" is to seek a better future for their families, risking their lives in the gauntlet of death that is the desert. We demand justice and peace in our communities, and border policies built on the principles of dignity, justice and equality that uphold human and civil rights of all peoples crossing the U.S./México border and living in the United States.

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