

Illinois Jewish clergy condemn ICE's escalating campaign in our state

This letter appeared in the [Chicago Sun-Times](#) on Monday, October 27th. Clergy can add their name by [signing on here](#).

As Jewish clergy serving communities across Chicago and Illinois, we write in opposition to the escalating campaign of fear and repression in our city and suburbs by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Over the past several weeks, ICE has disappeared people, used tear gas in residential neighborhoods, and shot at least two residents with live rounds, one fatally. At Broadview, agents have fired rubber bullets on demonstrators, including our fellow clergy members. In the South Shore neighborhood, ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents launched an overnight militaristic raid on an apartment building, indiscriminately sweeping up U.S. citizens and non-citizens alike, dragging families from their beds, separating children from their parents, and leaving them handcuffed outdoors for hours.

These tactics are stoking fear across Illinois.

As Americans, we believe deeply in our nation's history as a place founded by and strengthened by those seeking refuge on our shores. **As Jews, we are commanded 36 times in the Torah to welcome the *ger* (גר), the stranger, the foreigner, the immigrant, the refugee.** "The *ger* who resides with you shall be as the citizen among you... and you shall love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33–34). It is our patriotic and holy obligation to uphold a just immigration policy and help protect our vulnerable neighbors.

Many of us have ancestors who came to this country fleeing the state-sponsored terror of paramilitary forces patrolling their neighborhoods. Our history teaches us that safety cannot come from repression, that it comes from connection, showing up for our neighbors, and from refusing to be silent when the state's power is used to target and isolate a community.

We must use the tools at our disposal to protect our communities and ensure a just and compassionate immigration policy. Right now, a large coalition of community organizations, led by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), is asking lawmakers in Springfield to pass a legislative package to protect all our neighbors, called Safety and Action for Liberation Together (S.A.L.T.), which would:

- Bar civil arrests by ICE and other law enforcement agencies at our state's courthouses

- Provide guidance for all hospitals in Illinois to protect patients and their staff from potential law enforcement activity, including ICE actions while inside their hospital buildings
- Expand the protections provided in the Safe Schools law to early childhood and higher education spaces
- Give Illinois residents the right to sue federal agencies for unlawful arrests and detentions

We call on the Illinois General Assembly to immediately pass the full package of legislation, and we call on people of all faiths to stand together to protect our communities and uphold human dignity.

Undersigned,

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Rabbi Ilana Axel

Rabbi Marc J. Belgrad

Rabbi Lisa Sari Bellows

Rabbi Rebecca Benoff

Rabbi Marc E. Berkson

Rabbi Aryeh Bernstein

Rabbi Steven Bob

Rabbi Allison Tick Brill

Rabbi Neil Brill

Rabbi Anna Calamaro

Rabbi Adam Chalom

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Rabbi Paul F. Cohen

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Rabbi Andrea Cosnowsky

Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus

Rabbi Rebecca Dubowe

Rabbi David Eber

Rabbi Laurence Edwards

Rabbi Bruce Elder

Rabbi Robert Feinberg

Rabbi Sam Feinsmith

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Rabbi Steve Hart
Rabbi Rachel Heaps
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This letter was crafted by the Illinois Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-IL) and the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs (JCUA), in collaboration with Illinois clergy. To learn more, contact Aaron Sofian (asofian@rac.org) or Jonathan Elbaz (jonathan@jcua.org). Clergy can add their name by [signing on here](#).