



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

April 28, 2009

Annie Sovcik, Esq.
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Human Rights First
100 Maryland Avenue, NE
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002-5625

Dear Ms. Sovcik:

Thank you for providing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with the opportunity to comment on the Human Rights First upcoming report, "U.S. Detention of Asylum Seekers." We value your contributions to the promotion of international human rights, especially for those seeking asylum in the United States, and welcome this opportunity work together.

Secretary Napolitano created the position of Special Advisor at ICE within days of taking office to focus on the significant growth in immigration detention over the last five years and asked me to serve in this capacity. I am dedicating these first months to the close examination of issues impacting detention and removal including arrest priorities, detention decisions and practices, and the utilization of alternatives to detention. I am fortunate to have many resources to inform this early assessment. There are excellent reports by governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations including Human Rights First that I have read. There are exceptional individuals affiliated with these agencies and organizations with whom I have spoken, all of them generous with their time and good counsel. There are all types of detention facilities that I have toured and willing detainees in every place with whom I have spoken. There are field data and audits and evaluations of activities in the field that I have reviewed. Shortly, I will present my preliminary findings and first recommendations to Secretary Napolitano. It is my intent that this briefing provides strategies to improve current practices and serve as the basis for measurable and sustainable reform. This will best be done in partnership with others in government and the community.

Your report about the detention of asylum seekers speaks to issues impacting many detainees in ICE custody and contributes to the body of work upon which we can build. It also identifies areas for improvement that we can address immediately. When public documents are requested, they will be provided timely and when those documents are in draft form, they will be forwarded as quickly as they become public records. To that point, I am sending you a copy of the 2007 ICE Parole Policy pursuant to Section 903 of the Haitian Refugee Immigration and Fairness Act today, and will transmit a copy of the 2008 report upon its completion. Likewise, providing Human Rights First with access to detention facilities to conduct its work also enables ICE to better perform its governmental functions. We regret the difficulty you recently encountered at two facilities and are resolved that it should not happen again.

Annie Sovcik, Esq
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I look forward to continuing this conversation and will take the liberty of contacting you to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dora Schriro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D" that loops back under the rest of the name.

Dora Schriro
Special Advisor to the Secretary