

Statesman

Mayor Adler in open letter to Austin: ICE raids harming community



[Tony Plohetski](#) American-Statesman Staff, KVUE News

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Austin Mayor Steve Adler on Tuesday released an open letter to Austin, condemning a recent operation by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency in the area that [led to the arrests of 51 people](#).

Adler reaffirmed that Austin is a “welcoming, inclusive” community and that “we need ever more to visibly express and reaffirm our values.”

Federal immigration officials have said their operation has focused on people with criminal convictions and violent offenders.

Here’s Adler’s letter:

Austin is a welcoming, inclusive community where we prioritize everyone’s safety. With the current immigration enforcement action, we need ever more to visibly express and reaffirm our values, individually and collectively. The overly broad way these ICE raids are being conducted is making our community less safe and causing disproportionate harm by dividing the families of non-serious offenders and others who are of no threat and have been caught merely in the wrong place at the wrong time.

These secretive raids are occurring without any coordination with the Austin Police Department or the Travis County Sheriff’s Office. One consequence of this is the fear and panic among many of our neighbors who do not pose threats to our community. Some family members are disappearing with their whereabouts unknown. Some parents, fearful of apprehension, aren’t sure of what will happen to their US-born citizen children, not to mention the home they’ve owned for years and into which they’ve placed all their family savings. These raids are sowing distrust, not just with ICE but even with local law enforcement, and that makes our community less safe.

Austin police continue to serve the entire community without regard to immigration status. We are one of the safest communities in the country in large part because of the trust our residents place in our local law enforcement personnel. We are told by our law enforcement professionals, our Police Chief (as with his predecessor), our Sheriff, and even the Major Cities Chiefs Association, that participating in a voluntary, warrantless “detainer” program, which is not required by law, will make our community less safe because it jeopardizes community trust.

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In fact, and you wouldn't know it from the debate here locally, local authorities in 43 states refused to honor more than 16,000 detainer requests from ICE from October 2013 to December 2015. Only in Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, Vermont and Wyoming did local officials honor all requests, and detainees are relatively rare in those states. See, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/02/10/sheriffs-still-looking-for-clarity-on-deportation>.

“A good many jails and even states have said that they will not honor the detainer requests without a warrant. This is not an unreasonable request and certainly doesn't mean they're unwilling to cooperate. They just want to ensure they are operating within the law,” says Darrel Stephens, director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

I will continue to speak out in defense of our community and urge people on all sides of this issue to continue to make themselves heard clearly and peacefully. Please, do not put yourself or our local police in danger. Our police department wants all residents in Austin to be safe regardless of their immigration status.

There is help in Austin if you need it.

· AISD Superintendent Paul Cruz has posted resources available to immigrant and refugee students, parents, and employees [on the school district's website](#).

· If you need legal help or want to volunteer to help, there is contact information for several local immigration legal aid organizations [on my website](#).

· If you want to donate to these legal aid organizations, you can give directly. You can also give to the [Travis County #StrongerTogether Fund](#) created to receive charitable donations to help fund crucial programs for Travis County women, children and veterans. Funds raised will go directly to prevent the abrupt end of these programs due to the elimination of Criminal Justice Division grants.

Until this ICE enforcement operation leaves town, and then should it ever return, I will continue to monitor the situation and stay in close contact with our Police Chief, City of Austin management, my colleague local elected officials, and the Mexican Consul General. In this difficult situation, it is so important for us to show our neighbors and the world who we are and what we're made of. Let's take care of each other.