

10-5-1990

Border Patrol Raids Refugee Shelter Run By Catholic Church In Brownsville, Texas

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Border Patrol Raids Refugee Shelter Run By Catholic Church In Brownsville, Texas." (1990).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/4519>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Border Patrol Raids Refugee Shelter Run By Catholic Church In Brownsville, Texas

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, October 5, 1990

On Sept. 28, the US Justice Department ordered the Border Patrol to search the Oscar Arnulfo Romero refugee center run by the Catholic Archdiocese in Brownsville, Texas. Border patrol agent Francisco Chavarria said that the action was authorized following reports that the shelter was housing armed Iranian nationals. Neither Iranians nor weapons were found. Forty undocumented persons from Honduras, Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, India, and Pakistan were detained. Herman Gonzalez, director of the diocesan Christian services in Brownsville, denounced the "unnecessary use of force," citing instances of INS agents pushing the refugees with their weapons and pulling their hair. He said that there were helicopter backups and a large number of agents involved. Ninfa Krueger Ochoa, director of the Border Association for Central American Refugees (BARCA), said the raid may have been orchestrated as a result of fears that Congress will reduce Justice Department funding for FY1991. Thus, she said, they concocted the claim that refugee safehouses have been infiltrated by "Muslim terrorists." Norma Pimentel, director of the Romero house, said that during their journey through Mexico most of the refugees had experienced various forms of abuse but were unable to denounce the perpetrators for fear of being deported. For refugee women en route to the US, rape is a painfully common experience which is rarely talked about even to family or friends. Nicaraguan refugee Deyanira Palacios said, "They take everything we have, \$50, \$100, whatever." At a meeting of refugee advocates following the raid, Nongovernmental Organizations National Commission for Refugee Aid representative, Roberto Zavala, said that the action at the Oscar Arnulfo Romero house reflects policies that will be implemented under recently appointed regional director of Immigration and Naturalization (INS), Michael Trominsky. Zavala expressed concern over what he sees as an increasingly hard-line immigration policy. He said such actions "damage the humanitarian efforts of groups which work to aid a vulnerable population." Pimentel commented that the 150 Central American refugees who remain at the house live in fear of another raid. [On Oct. 4, according to regional coordinator of migration affairs in Tamaulipas state (Mexico), Antolin Licona Lopez, 5,000 Central Americans were detained and deported during the first half of 1990 in Matamoros. Matamoros is the border-crossing point to the US city of Brownsville.] (Basic data from Notimex, 09/29/90, 10/04/90)

-- End --