

Voces del la Frontera: Happening now- Wisconsin Jewish leaders shut down Milwaukee ICE office in civil disobedience

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Milwaukee action is part of a national wave of Jewish-led "Never Again" actions to resist the Trump Administration's campaign of terror against immigrants and refugees

Never Again protesters blocking the garage doors of the Milwaukee ICE office to stop ICE agents from leaving to carry out raids. 8/1/19.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN — On Thursday, August 1st, beginning a shortly after 9 AM, 22 Wisconsin Jewish leaders began blockading the garage doors of the Milwaukee Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office in an act of civil disobedience to stop ICE agents from leaving to carry out raids and detentions that day and to show Jewish solidarity with immigrant communities threatened by Trump and deportation. The group is calling for the closure of the Trump Administration's concentration camps at the border and permanent protection for undocumented immigrants and people seeking asylum.

"This an act of remembrance," said former Wisconsin State Representative Sandy Pasch. "Never Again in 2019 means we demand that the Trump Administration close the camps at the border, shut down ICE, and provide permanent protection for all undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers."

“We know that #NeverAgainIsNow,” said Dr. Michael Rosen, a retired professor at Milwaukee Area Technical College and former president of AFT Local 212.

“American Jews grew up learning about the Holocaust from survivors in our families or communities, refugees in every sense of the word. Many of us had relatives murdered in the Nazi concentration camps. We are sounding the alarm and directing national outrage where it belongs, to the government’s treatment of immigrants.”

“Our whole lives we were taught, ‘You shall not stand idly by,’” said Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman of Congregation Shaarei Shamayim in Madison, one of the organizers of Thursday’s action. “We refuse to remain silent when migrants face inhumane treatment. We refuse to remain silent when they are forced into filthy, overcrowded detention centers and deprived of basic rights. American Jews came to this country seeking a better way of life and at times fleeing persecution. We stand in solidarity with today’s immigrant community. We will protest until our government treats them with dignity.”

On Tuesday, Jewish community members in Minneapolis blocked entrances to a federal building. These actions follow a month of Jewish-led Never Again actions across the country at detention centers and ICE buildings in New Jersey, Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

The Never Again Is Now Wisconsin group further explained Thursday’s action with the following statement:

“Central to Jewish life is the concept of Tikkun olam, the responsibility to heal the world and pursue social justice. Jews are taught from an early age that to remain silent in the face of injustice is morally unacceptable. We know from bitter experience where the separation of families, the rounding up of people, and the creation of detention/concentration camps leads. We refuse to wait and see what happens next. We are putting our bodies on the line and risking arrest in memory of our loved ones whose families were broken up, whose lives were stolen, and because when we say never again, we mean never again for anyone. We take action now to stop the breaking up of families and the deportation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers and to demand that ICE be shut down.”

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