



‘Progress by Pesach’ urged on immigration reform

January 29, 2009

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- A coalition of Jewish organizations launched a campaign aiming for “Progress by Pesach” on comprehensive immigration reform.

On a Thursday morning conference call organized by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, members of the Progress by Pesach coalition said they would be urging President Obama to issue an executive order or other directive to Immigration and Customs Enforcement curtailing the use of raids as a primary tool of immigration enforcement. They also expressed hope for some movement in Congress on the issue, but HIAS President and CEO Gideon Aronoff said the group was not proposing a detailed bill because their main goal is “mobilizing the Jewish community to call for engagement on these issues.”

The group has set a goal of 10,000 signatures by April 8, the first night of Passover, on a petition encouraging "humanitarian immigration reform" and decrying the "policy of relying on raids and enforcement tactics as the sole means of controlling immigration" as a failure. Visitors to the [group's Web site](#) can also send a letter to the president and members of Congress that contains similar language.

"We are calling on the Obama administration to take whatever steps it can take in order to achieve some change in the use of raids," said Vic Rosenthal, executive director of Jewish Community Action of St. Paul.

In addition to denying equal protection to those detained and splitting up families through jailing and deportations, he noted that immigration raids also are expensive for the government and seriously impede businesses trying to make products in a poor economy.

Jane Ramsey, executive director of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs in Chicago, said members of the coalition would be encouraged to publicize the online petition and letters at their activities and other Jewish community events.

"Jewish law compels us to be engaged on this issue," said Rabbi Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, citing the biblical command that "we must love the stranger, because we were once strangers in the land of Egypt."

The coalition also includes the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Rabbinical Assembly, the Union of Reform Judaism and a number of local organizations.

[NOTE: The Jewish Labor Committee is part of this coalition.]

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