January 12, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Secretary Johnson and Attorney General Lynch,

We, the undersigned veterans’ service organizations and veterans legal services providers, are deeply troubled by the recent immigration raids that target Central American refugee parents and children, a population suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related conditions. No one understands better than veterans the profound health impacts of exposure to trauma. We urge the Administration to immediately modify its immigration enforcement and removal operations to accommodate PTSD and other trauma-related disabilities suffered by these refugees.

We, our members, and the veterans we serve, know full well the extraordinary challenges of living with the health consequences of exposure to trauma, including PTSD. For decades our organizations have fought to have the U.S. government recognize the debilitating effects of this invisible injury on service members returning home. Because of our efforts, there is a deeper understanding about this disability by the general public and greater accommodations by the government, although much work remains to be done. As veterans’ service organizations, we must speak out and re-iterate that PTSD and other trauma-related health conditions are disabilities that warrant reasonable accommodations under the law.

We understand that many of the refugees fleeing from Central America suffer from severe PTSD due to extreme violence in their countries of origin. They include women who have survived sexual assault and other gender- or gang-based violence. These refugees, many who meet the diagnostic criteria of PTSD or other trauma-related conditions, are disabled and should be provided reasonable accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Reports of the violent conduct of the current immigration raids are especially troubling because they risk further re-traumatizing a population already suffering from PTSD. The Administration must acknowledge the seriousness of this disability among this target population and adjust their operations to prevent further harm.
Sincerely,

**Veterans’ Service Organizations**

National Veterans Council for Legal Redress  
Swords to Plowshares  
Veterans Health Council  
Vietnam Veterans of America

**Veterans Legal Services Providers**

Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic, William & Mary Law School  
Veteran Advocacy Project, Urban Justice Center  
Veterans Law Center, University of Wisconsin Law School Pro Bono Program  
Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic, Thomas Jefferson School of Law  
Veterans Legal Clinic, Syracuse University College of Law  
Veterans Legal Services Clinic, Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School

cc:  
Stevan Bunnell, General Counsel  
David Shahoulian, Deputy General Counsel  
Office of the General Counsel  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Mail Stop 3650  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Sarah R. Saldaña, Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
500 12th St., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20536

Megan H. Mack, Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties  
Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Building 410, Mail Stop #0190  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Vanita Gupta  
Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Office of the Assistant Attorney General, Main  
Washington, D.C. 20530