

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/right-asylum-what-can-we-do> Campaign and Advocacy

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In the last few weeks we walked together on the path to understand asylum; we discussed the horrors of detention and the lack of legal counsel, as well as many inhumane practices that violate human rights standards. For this last blog we will look at the **situation regarding the right to asylum here in the state of Ohio**, as well as examine the **ways in which we, regular citizens, can respond to human rights concerns**.

Following the recent reports of the mass-media it is alarming to see that asylum is being more and more deregulated, while more and more people are being apprehended and detained. For example, I simply could not grasp the story of 10-year-old [Rosa Maria Hernandez](#). This particular statement should make us all question the fate of our humanity:

Border Patrol agents followed the ambulance [as she went to hospital for gallbladder surgery] and camped outside the hospital room of a 10-year-old girl with cerebral palsy getting emergency surgery then jailed her in a detention center for kids. [Source: [ACLU](#)]

Moreover, Alan Gomez of *USA Today*, reported that Trump Administration is planning to increase the capacity of migration detention with thousands of spots, and collected quite appalling statistics:

From January 22nd through September 9th, [ICE] arrested 97,482 people suspected of being in the country illegally, a 43% increase over the same time period in 2016. During the same span, ICE arrested 28,011 undocumented immigrants without a criminal record, a 179% increase from the same period in 2016. [Source: [US Today](#)]

All of Trumps plans come to the delight of the private detention corporations such as CoreCivic and GEO Group. Since Donald Trumps election their **stocks have skyrocketed** (CoreCivic by 81% and GEO by 63%); the lists of new contracts expands for them too. For example, only in Houston, TX, GEO received \$110 million for building an immigration detention facility what an offset for \$475k donated to the Trump campaign and his inauguration celebration... [Source: [US Today](#)]

Moreover, the US Attorney General, **Jeff Sessions** claimed recently that [This system \[of asylum\] is currently subject to rampant abuse and fraud. And as this system becomes overloaded with fake claims, it cannot deal effectively with just claims](#) not noticing that the rise of fake claims comes with violence, torture, rapes, and murders that prone asylum seekers out of their places of origin. Not sure if watching new Ai Weiweis masterpiece film: [Human Flow](#) could help Mr. Sessions to understand these circumstances, but, surely watching it, can inspire us to take action and shake our consciousness for lack of previous responses to amend this daunting reality.

Amongst this overall hopelessness appears a question - what can I do? In fact, there are many answers to it:

For instance, starting a sanctuary at your congregation requires a joint effort of the members, but can be a perfect opportunity of bringing their faith to life. Check the [interfaith toolkit](#). You can also press your local officials to create a sanctuary space within their jurisdiction. Such has already been achieved (more or less) in Lorain, Ohio. Moreover, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Dayton are proclaimed sanctuary cities described as, [a municipality that limits communication between local law enforcement officers and federal \[immigration\] agents](#).

You can also gain more **awareness** on the issue. The forerunner of the Immigration & Human Rights Clinic at The Akron University School of Law **Professor Elizabeth Knowles*** shares with us information about the situation of asylum seekers in the State of Ohio. She also provides examples of how she and her students have worked to alleviate human rights abuses for those who seek asylum here. Just to remind you many asylum seekers were last year involuntarily renditioned to a private detention facility in Youngstown, Ohio, (owned by CoreCivic).

To understand the nature of these issues I interviewed a forerunner of the Immigration & Human Rights Clinic at the Akron University School of Law **Professor Elizabeth Knowles***:

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Prof. Elizabeth Knowles is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Law at the University of Akron School of Law which she joined in 2016. At Akron Law, she supervises the Immigration & Human Rights Law Clinic and teaches asylum law. Before coming to Akron, she served as the Executive Director of the American Bar Associations Immigration Justice Project (IJP). She is a member of the California State Bar, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and the American Constitution Society (more information about prof. Knowles can be accessed over here: <https://goo.gl/NZ1vJB>).

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