



New Mexico

April 18, 2019

SENT VIA E-MAIL AND U.S. MAIL

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501
c/o matt.garcia@state.nm.us
c/o vanessa.kennedy@state.nm.us

Attorney General Hector Balderas
408 Galisteo Street
Villagra Building
Santa Fe, NM 87501

RE: Fascist Militia Organization Unlawfully Arrested 300 People in Southern New Mexico

Dear Governor Lujan Grisham and Attorney General Balderas:

Two nights ago, on April 16, 2019, an armed fascist militia organization describing itself as the United Constitutional Patriots arrested nearly three hundred people seeking safety in the United States, including young children, near Sunland Park, New Mexico. Other videos appear to show arrests in the past few hours.¹ The vigilante members of the organization, including Jim Benvie, who posted videos and photographs² of the unlawful arrests to social media, are not police or law enforcement and they have no authority under New Mexico or federal law to detain or arrest migrants in the United States. Their actions undermine the legitimate efforts of our state's law enforcement officials to keep New Mexico families safe and they erode community trust.

The Trump administration's vile racism has emboldened white nationalists and fascists to flagrantly violate the law. This has no place in our state: **we cannot allow racist and armed vigilantes to kidnap and detain people seeking asylum. We urge you to immediately investigate this atrocious and unlawful conduct.**

¹ U.S. Constitutional Patriots – New Mexico Border Ops, https://m.facebook.com/groups/314311732261330/?_tn=%2As-R.

² Rod Ardehali, "Trump's army: More than 300 asylum seekers surrender to armed militia of 'New Mexico residents, veterans and ex-cops', after crossing the US border," DAILY MAIL (April 17, 2019), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6932583/More-300-asylum-seekers-surrender-armed-militia-New-Mexico-citizens.html>.



Please call or contact us at msanchez@aclu-nm.org and klove@aclu-nm.org if you wish to discuss this letter. Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

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CC:

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