

Activists to Obama Administration: Don't deport immigrants who don't deserve it

NY Immigration Coalition wants U.S. authorities to take a more humane approach to deportation decisions

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It came one week early, but [Sara Martínez](#) received perhaps the best possible Mother's Day gift: The deportation order that had hovered over her head like a dark cloud for many months was finally suspended.

The Ecuadoran woman, 47, a domestic worker who resides in Brooklyn since 2005 with her U.S.-born six-year old daughter, broke down in tears when she heard the news last Sunday.

In her fight against deportation, Martínez had the strong support of [Rep. Nydia Velázquez \(D-Brooklyn\)](#) and the New York Immigration Coalition. Both waged a tireless campaign to help her benefit from the new prosecutorial discretion policy announced by the [Obama Administration](#) last summer.

Under the new policy, immigrants like Martínez, who have close ties to the community and do not pose a threat to public safety or otherwise fall under one of the agency's priorities, are supposed to be favored for an exercise of discretion.

Unfortunately, happy endings like that of Martínez remain the exception, rather than the rule.

"We remain concerned," Velázquez said. "It took months and a massive campaign for ICE to follow its own rules. Cases like Sara's are too common."

They certainly are.

Take, for instance, the case of [Humayun Kabir Chowdhury](#), a decent, taxpaying taxi driver from Bangladesh with a U.S.-born son, a clean record and 21 years of residence in the city, who has been in an immigration jail for 10 months awaiting deportation.

This despite the fact that Chowdhury seems to fulfill every requisite to qualify for the new program. Meanwhile, his wife and 12-year-old son are desperate and without means of support.

Chowdhury's case cries out for a quick solution. He should be allowed to return to his family, his job and his community without delay. Yet, ICE application of the new policy has been uneven and unpredictable, to say the least.

“To date, ICE, the enforcement arm of the Department of Homeland Security, has determined that only 7.5% of the cases reviewed nationally merit an exercise of discretion under this new policy,” according to the New York Immigration Coalition.

“In New York City, of the approximately 20,000 cases that have been reviewed, only 207, or 1%, have been closed,” the coalition added.

Not surprisingly, the New York office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement announcement that it would close the immigration court until May 18 in order to speed up the reviewing of a backlog of thousands of pending deportation cases has been received with skepticism.

Last Monday an ecumenical group of faith leaders gathered at St. Luke’s Church in midtown Manhattan to speak out against the uneven application of the discretion policy and to form, together with community leaders, a Family Defense Commission. Its purpose is to ensure that immigrant communities benefit from the new policy.

The New York Immigration Coalition, Make The Road New York, Queens Congregations United for Action, the New Sanctuary Coalition, Mandarin Center for Community Action, the Staten Island Clergy Leadership, and the New York State Interfaith Network for Immigration Reform have collaborated to establish the New York-based commission.

“At this crucial time, with such low case closure rates to date, the New York area’s Family Defense Commission questions the Administration’s commitment to ensuring that eligible families are spared the trauma of deportation,” the commission members said in a statement.

As [Chung-Wha Hong](#), the NYIC’s executive director, wrote in a letter to the New York Times: “It’s incumbent on President Obama to ensure that prosecutorial discretion is used in good faith, based on the merits of the cases instead of meeting a numerical goal set at 400,000.”

It remains to be seen if this will ever happen.

Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/activists-obama-administration-deport-immigrants-deserve-article-1.1074423#ixzz1uTPbe2Nd>