



## **US Attorney General Threatens to Cut Funds from Sanctuary Jurisdictions**

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U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced Monday the Justice Determent will withdraw grant funds from local jurisdictions that do not comply with immigration laws.

At a White House briefing, the nation's top law enforcement official said sanctuary jurisdictions endanger lives of "every American" and put the whole community at risk.

“Today, I'm urging states and local jurisdictions to comply with these federal laws including 8 USC Section 1373. Moreover, the Department of Justice will require that jurisdictions seeking or applying for Department of Justice (DOJ) grants to certify compliance with 1373 as a condition of receiving those awards,” Sessions said.

Section 1373 requires that federal, state, and local government entities cooperate with immigration officials regarding an individual's citizenship and immigration status.

Sanctuary jurisdictions, which include 600 sanctuary cities and counties, as well as some states according to the National Immigration Law Center, are jurisdictions that choose not to inform immigration officials when certain undocumented immigrants are released from official custody. Most often these are immigrants who were charged with or convicted of minor crimes.

In the current fiscal year, Sessions said, DOJ anticipates awarding more than \$4.1 billion in law enforcement grants. He “strongly” urged states, cities and counties to consider carefully the “harm they are doing to their citizens by refusing to enforce our immigration laws and to rethink these policies.”

“When cities and states refuse to help enforce immigration laws, our nation is less safe. Failure to deport aliens who are convicted of criminal offenses puts whole communities at risk — especially immigrant communities in the very sanctuary jurisdictions that seek to protect the perpetrators,” he said.

These policies, he said, include refusing to detain known felons under federal detainer request. A detainer request is a request that local law enforcement hold on to individuals who U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) says are subject to deportation.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security last week issued a report showing that in the week of Jan. 28 to Feb. 3 more than "200 instances of jurisdictions refusing to honor ICE detainer requests with respect to individuals charged or convicted of a serious crime," Sessions said.

### **Local law enforcement**

But police chiefs have voiced their concern over some of the Trump administration's policies when it comes to detainees.

Law enforcement authorities say cutting federal funding to "force" local policies to change is "troubling" and the notion that police do not cooperate with ICE is wrong.

J. Thomas Manger, president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, told VOA in a recent interview that police agencies cooperate with ICE in many areas, but they do not want to engage in civil immigration enforcement or act on detainer requests without a warrant.

"Other than that there is cooperation on dealing with drugs, gangs, human trafficking and arresting immigrants who have committed crimes," Manger said.

Manger is the police chief of Montgomery County, Maryland, a populous area adjacent to Washington, D.C., which is not a sanctuary county but has some sanctuary policies. Recently a 14-year old was reportedly raped by two undocumented immigrants — Henry E. Sanchez Milian, 18, and Jose O. Montano, 17 — enrolled in public school after moving to the United States illegally from Central America.

Sessions did not directly answer a reporter's question if anyone from the DOJ had spoken about the rape case with any Montgomery County official, but urged people in the state of Maryland to oppose any sanctuary legislation. Maryland is currently considering adopting sanctuary status.

### **Less likely to commit crimes**

Alex Nowrasteh, immigration policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute, which advocates more liberal immigration laws, said several studies have concluded that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than people born in the United States.

Nowrasteh's research called "Criminal Immigrants: Their Numbers, Demographics, and Countries of Origin" shows that "Illegal immigrants are 44 percent less likely to be incarcerated than natives. Legal immigrants are 69 percent less likely to be incarcerated than natives."

"And the places that they move to in the United States, you typically see crime declines in those areas," Nowrasteh told VOA.

The Sentencing Project in its report, Immigration and Public Safety, published this month, documents that increased immigration may be responsible for a drop in crime.

“The violent crime rate began to fall in the mid-1990s, and by 2014 it was half of its 1990 level, at 362 offenses per 100,000 residents,” the lobbying group writes. “By that year, the foreign-born population had more than doubled, reaching 42.2 million people [including 11.1 million undocumented people].”

But in the White House briefing Sessions cited the 2015 killing in San Francisco of Kathryn Steinle. Her killer had reportedly been convicted of crimes and deported numerous times. Yet, he was able to enter United States illegally.

“The American people want and deserve a lawful system of immigration that keeps us safe, and one that serves the national interests. This expectation is reasonable, just, and our government has the duty to meet it and we will meet it,” he said.