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## Statement of Most Rev. John C. Wester on the First Anniversary of the Postville Raids

John C. Wester

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# Committee on Migration

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## Statement of Most Rev. John C. Wester On The First Anniversary of the Postville Raids April 28, 2009

May 12, 2009 marks the one-year anniversary of what was, at the time, the largest work site immigration enforcement raid in history. Since that raid in Postville, Iowa larger raids have occurred, but the precedent set at Postville and the accompanying compassionate response by that small Iowa community and its people of faith underscore the humanitarian costs of workplace immigration raids as well as the need for reform of our nation's immigration policies.

As religious leaders, my brother Catholic bishops and I understand and support the need to apprehend and arrest individuals who are responsible for violent crimes, felonies and other serious offenses. The enforcement of just laws is necessary for public safety and the common good. But the capture of violent criminals, terrorists, drug smugglers and illegal gun dealers was not what occurred in Postville last year. Instead, what happened last May 12th was the arrest, detention and deportation of many hard working members of that quiet Iowa town. What the community witnessed and responded to was family separation, immense suffering, denial of due process rights and community division.

Our religious and social response to such harm to our God-given human dignity is based on Scriptures, which call believers to welcome the newcomers among us, to treat the alien with respect and charity, and to provide pastoral and humanitarian assistance to individuals and their families.

The Postville raid last year underscores the need to fix the nation's broken immigration policies and practices, adequately address the demand for labor, ensure the consistent protection of human rights in all immigration enforcement actions, and, most importantly, keep families together.

I ask all Catholics, the greater faith community, and persons of good will to commemorate the Postville raid of May 12, 2009 by remembering in their prayers those hurt by the raid and to work for comprehensive immigration reform so that others will not face similar pain and cruelty in the future.

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