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Rights said violated in ICE raids
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BOSTON - A union-sponsored commission looking at alleged violations by federal agents heard a Springfield activist Monday accuse the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency of breaking the law during a Springfield raid last May.

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"This was a very serious raid that traumatized the community," said Caroline Murray, executive director of the Alliance to Develop Power, an immigrant rights group in Springfield.

She said 20 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents entered a home in Springfield on May 30 without a warrant, dragging two men out of bed and forcing a woman and her baby out of the bathroom shower.

Agents arrested six immigrants that night, Murray said. Three were deported immediately, two were given voluntary departure and one's case is still pending. Immigrants given voluntary departure have the option of applying for legal re-entry.

Murray's testimony came as others recounted alleged abuses by the ICE, including a raid on a New Bedford manufacturer that has been criticized by state officials for the aftermath that saw children separated from their parents.

"The commission has heard previously about raids in the workplace," Murray told the Statehouse gathering that included Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray. "But this was their first opportunity to hear about raids in private homes."

The commission is made up of a panel of citizens, including former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack, created by the United Food & Commercial Workers International Union.

The group is traveling the country to gather allegations of constitutional abuses by the federal government in its handling of illegal immigrants. It will make its report available to Congress in two months, according to Murray.

Attempts to reach the ICE General Counsel's Office in Boston were unsuccessful.


An aide to Springfield Police Commissioner William J. Fitchet said the department has officers available to accompany federal agents apprehending suspected illegal immigrants. Murray said Springfield officers did not participate in the raid last May.

In addition to their immigration work, Murray's group advocates for accessible healthcare and affordable housing. They've renovated 1,450 condemned units into affordable living spaces, according to a press release. They also buy lots to help Springfield residents launch small businesses.

But protecting the rights of immigrants remains a top priority, Murray said.

"Major violations of the Constitution are taking place," Murray said. "I don't think anyone wants that to be what America's about."

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