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Masked federal agents wait outside an immigration courtroom on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, in New York. (AP/Olga Fedorova)

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The Trump administration plans to appeal a federal judge's July 11 ruling that bars immigration officers in Southern California from conducting immigration enforcement actions based solely on a person's race or the fact that person is speaking Spanish.

Catholic immigration advocates have expressed concern about some Immigration and Customs Enforcement-led efforts in Southern California. The bishop of San Bernardino, California, on July 8 issued a first of its kind dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for the faithful if they fear for their well-being from operations carried out by ICE agents.

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Maame Ewusi-Mensah Frimpong in Los Angeles said that immigration enforcement officers must have "reasonable suspicion that the person to be stopped is within the United States in violation of U.S. immigration law."

She ruled that, except as permitted by law, agents' suspicion of immigration violations cannot be based — alone or in combination — on a person's apparent race or ethnicity; speaking Spanish or speaking English with an accent; presence at a particular location; or the type of work one does.

In a statement to Southern California's City News Service, White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson argued, "No federal judge has the authority to dictate immigration policy — that authority rests with Congress and the president."

"Enforcement operations require careful planning and execution; skills far beyond the purview or jurisdiction of any judge. We expect this gross overstep of judicial authority to be corrected on appeal," Jackson added.

Frimpong's order prohibiting "roving patrols" detaining people based on presence at certain locations, specified examples such as bus stops, day laborer sites, car washes or agricultural sites as a basis for detaining people.

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The ruling comes amid controversy after Trump's border czar, Tom Homan said during an interview with Fox News that ICE agents do not need probable cause to detain someone, and listed "physical appearance" as among reasons officers could do so.

But Homan later walked back those comments on CNN, saying, "I want to be clear because my words were taken out of context."

"Physical description cannot be the sole reason to detain and question somebody. That can't be the sole reason to raise reasonable suspicion," he said. "It's a myriad of factors."

J. Kevin Appleby, senior fellow for policy at the New York-based Center for Migration Studies, and the former director of migration policy for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told OSV News, "It is sad that we are at a point in our country where racial profiling is being used openly to target people without probable cause."

"As history has shown, this can lead to the detention of legal residents and U.S. citizens, where the only evidence against them is the color of their skin," Appleby said.

Catholic social teaching on immigration seeks to balance three interrelated principles: the right of persons to migrate in order to sustain themselves and their families, the right of a country to regulate its borders and immigration, and a nation's duty to conduct that regulation with justice and mercy.

Media reports across the country have increasingly cited cases of U.S. citizens being detained by immigration enforcement officials amid the Trump administration's intensifying mass deportation campaign.

Prior to current efforts, a Government Accountability Office report in 2021 found that from 2015-2020 ICE may have deported 70 American citizens wrongly identified as foreign nationals.

A joint report between organizations affiliated with different Christian churches and published this year found that 80% of the people targeted by the Trump administration's pursuit of what it has called "the largest deportation in U.S. history" are Christian. Out of 10 million Christians vulnerable to deportation, 61% are Catholic.

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.