News



Staff work at a car rental counter for companies including Enterprise and Alamo. (Wikimedia Commons/CC Attribution 2.0 Generic/Rusty Clark)



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The Sisters of Social Service have ended their lease of cars from Enterprise over allegations the company is supplying vehicles for the U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement.

The congregation's superior, Sr. Maribeth Larkin, said that after ICE raids began in Los Angeles in early June, the sisters, who are based in L.A., began hearing that officers conducting the large-scale immigration sweeps were using vehicles rented from Enterprise.

Catholic sisters take a vow of poverty, so the cars they drive are usually owned or leased by their congregation. The Sisters of Social Service currently have 18 cars in their fleet, and had leased them from Enterprise since 2021.

"Every day, there are reports of violence they (ICE) are impacting our cities with," Larkin told Global Sisters Report. "And they have an endless supply of vehicles to put people in who want to harass people with dark skin."

In early July, the leadership team voted unanimously to contact Enterprise and ask for a meeting over the issue.

"As we see it, by leasing vehicles to ICE, Enterprise is aiding and abetting the unlawful apprehension of US residents, without regard to due process and in violation of the US Constitution," the July 14 letter reads. "As far as we SSS are concerned, we cannot continue to do business with you, if in fact Enterprise is cooperating with this lawless and predatory government activity."

Larkin said the Enterprise officials the sisters met with said it was a different area of the company that worked with ICE.

"They certainly didn't deny it," she said. "All they could say is this is not happening in their department."

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EAN Holdings, LLC, the parent corporation of Enterprise and its associated companies, has more than 1,100 contracts with federal agencies to supply vehicles, according to USASpending.gov, the public database of federal contracts, grants and loans. Only two of those contracts are with the Department of Homeland Security, but both are for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, not ICE. However, ICE could be renting vehicles on short-term leases that would not appear in the contracts database.

A request made to Enterprise for comment was not immediately returned.

The process of ending the contract, however, has not been easy, as the congregation has had to work with three different auto dealerships and arrange for sisters, who are based all over California, to come to L.A. to return their vehicles and pick up the new ones.

"It's dragged on, for sure," Larkin said. "I feel like I'm a used car salesperson now, with cars coming and cars going."

But at a time when the sisters had felt powerless against the injustices they were seeing, this was something they could do about it.

"It’s one small effort among many others we're engaged in to disrupt the system and take a stand," Larkin said. "It's taking a lot of time and energy, but it's for a good cause."

And the sisters are working to spread the word.

Larkin said that when people from Enterprise come to pick up the cars the sisters are returning, she makes sure they know it's not just because the lease was up.

"One guy said he can't wait to get back to the shop and tell the guys," she said. "He said, 'They'll be outraged.' "

The change has been a hassle for the sisters, as well, Larkin said, but they understand.

"There's been a little grumbling about the inconvenience, but the bottom line is it's the right thing to do," she said.