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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers detain a man from a car stopped by Tenn

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers detain a man from a car stopped by Tennessee Highway Patrol at a gas station in South Nashville, Tennessee, May 10. (OSV News Reuters/Seth Herald)

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Data showing most individuals in immigration detention do not have violent criminal records highlights ongoing concerns expressed by the nation's Catholic bishops over the Trump administration immigration crackdown, said an official with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

CBS News reported Feb. 9 that "less than 14% of nearly 400,000 immigrants arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in President Trump's first year back in the White House had charges or convictions for violent criminal offenses."

The news outlet cited an internal Department of Homeland Security document it had obtained, showing almost 40% of those arrested lacked a criminal record altogether, and were accused of civil immigration offenses — such as being in the U.S. without legal authorization or overstaying a visa — that are usually adjudicated in civil court

proceedings.

The internal document, which aligns with data compiled by Syracuse University, contrasts sharply with Trump administration claims it is targeting the violent criminals in its sweeping immigration detention operations.

"The data we are seeing related to the demographics of people being arrested, detained and deported, along with the real-life human impacts these statistics represent, underscore precisely why the U.S. bishops, in their special message last November, expressed their opposition to the 'indiscriminate mass deportation of people,'" David Spicer, policy and engagement director for the USCCB's Secretariat of Migration, told OSV News.

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"The vast majority of Americans, including the bishops themselves, support immigration enforcement efforts that prioritize those in our country who pose genuine threats to national security or public safety," Spicer explained.

But, he said, "a sweeping and at times punitive approach to enforcement — which is seemingly driven by numerical quotas — leads to, as the bishops have said, an environment that 'undermines the already limited due process provided to noncitizens, threatens family unity, and foments discrimination.'"

"Respecting human dignity and upholding the rule of law are not in conflict," Spicer stressed.

He also noted that the U.S. is also "grappling with the consequences of a woefully inadequate immigration system that is in desperate need of meaningful reform," adding, "without that, we will continue to see outcomes that are inconsistent with fundamental American values."

Spicer quoted St. John Paul II's 1995 encyclical, Evangelium Vitae ("The Gospel of Life"): "A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized."

And, said Spicer, "As Catholics guided by the Gospel and Church teaching, we are left asking ourselves: Is the current approach to immigration and immigrants furthering the common good? Is it promoting human life and dignity, especially regarding the poorest and most vulnerable among us? Is it strengthening families and communities?"

"If our answer to any of these questions is 'no,' then our faith calls us to work toward something better — and to reflect it in our words and deeds," he said.

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.