

PETITION

Protesting eviction notices served on Somali families

We, the undersigned, denounce the use of eviction notices as a tool to harass Somali families who have already suffered abusive and racist treatment by the federal government.

On July 26, 18 Somali men in the Seattle area were arrested for distributing khat, a plant which is chewed on social occasions in several African countries, and which has an effect similar to a strong espresso drink. Khat is legal in Africa and Europe and whether it is illegal in the U.S. has yet to be determined in a court of law. Yet the DEA, FBI and agents from other agencies descended on the homes of these 18 families in the early morning as they were sleeping, breaking down doors, entering with guns drawn, tearing apart furniture and handcuffing pregnant women and children. It is outrageous that because they are East African immigrants and Muslims, these families are being treated as terrorists.

Shortly after the arrests over 200 community members rallied in support of the 18 families, and the men were released on their own recognizance while they await an April 2007 trial date. However, at least five of the families were then served eviction notices, those on public assistance being particularly targeted.

Thanks to pro-bono legal help and community support, none of the families have yet been forced out of their homes, but it is clear that the government is using the threat of homelessness to intimidate the men facing trial and the wives and sisters who have been organizing for their defense.

We call on the federal government to cease and desist from these McCarthy-era tactics. In the 1950s the government used similar tactics, serving eviction notices on people who lived in public housing whose relatives had been blacklisted. These evictions were later ruled unconstitutional.

We also call on city officials and housing administrators to denounce these scare tactics and to refuse to cooperate with any attempt to evict these families.

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Please return this petition to: Radical Women, 5018 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98118.
206-722-6057 • RWseattle@mindspring.com • www.RadicalWomen.org