



■ news release

Lawsuit Seeks to Stop U.S. From Drugging Immigrants

ACLU/SC and Law Firm Sue for Damages for Two Men Forcibly Sedated

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

LOS ANGELES — The ACLU of Southern California and law firm Munger, Tolles and Olson LLP filed a federal class action lawsuit today to stop the government's policy of forcibly drugging people facing deportation. The suit was brought on behalf of two immigrants who were drugged against their will by U.S. officials and seeks an immediate end to the practice as well as damages for the two men.

"Our Constitution does not allow the government to treat immigrants like animals. Injecting people who are not mentally ill with psychotropic drugs is illegal, immoral, and medically inappropriate," said ACLU/SC staff attorney Ahilan Arulanantham.

Federal officials have publicly admitted to forcibly injecting immigrants with powerful drugs in order to render them less "agitated" for deportation. Yet detention standards from the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) state that detainees may not be forcibly medicated if they are not mentally ill, simply for "staff convenience." Neither of the plaintiffs had any history of mental illness.

Raymond Soeoth, an Indonesian citizen and ordained Christian minister who came to the United States in 1999, is seeking political asylum. In December 2004, immigration officials planning to deport him from the San Pedro Detention Center brought him to a cell, held him down, and injected him with Haldol, an anti-psychotic drug that can be lethal to some patients. The drug was prescribed by a physician working for ICE who had not examined Soeoth.

Amadou Diouf, a native of Senegal who entered the U.S. in 1996 to study at the California State University at Northridge, is married to a U.S. citizen. Despite a federal court order barring his deportation, immigration officials scheduled him for deportation in February 2006. On board an airplane bound for Senegal at Los Angeles International Airport, officials pushed him to the ground and injected him with an unidentified psychotropic drug after he attempted to speak with the captain of the flight.

Both Diouf and Soeoth were released in February after approximately two years in an immigration jail, as the result of a separate ACLU/SC lawsuit challenging their prolonged detention. They remain in the U.S.

The lawsuit names the ICE personnel who conducted the druggings, as well as Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and other senior officials. The ACLU/SC's action also includes a Freedom of Information Act request to reveal how often such forcible druggings occur and under what circumstances.

This is the web site of the **American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California** and the **ACLU Foundation of Southern California**. [Learn more](#) about the distinction between these two components of the ACLU. Copyright 2007 The ACLU of Southern California.