

A world without genocide - making it our legacy.

The **IMMIGRATION** Issue

Why Minnesota Matters More than Iran

by Ellen J. Kennedy, Ph.D., Executive Director



Why Minnesota Matters More than Iran. In March, that was the headline on Tom Friedman's *New York Times* column (March 15, 2026) soon after the US had launched airstrikes against Iran. Last year, he wrote, was one of the most depressing in his nearly 50 years of being a journalist, as he watched Trump dismantle democracy, erode the US on the global stage, and fill the administration with "a cabinet of clowns."

Then he visited Minnesota during **Operation Metro Surge**.

Mr. Friedman wrote about something he'd never seen in those 50 years: "a spontaneous uprising of civic activism propelled by a single idea – I am my neighbor's keeper, whoever he or she is and however he or she got here."

"It was one of the most courageous battles ever fought by American men and women not in uniform. It was led by moms ready to donate their breast milk to strangers and dads ready to drive someone else's kids to school because the parents, terrified of ICE agents, were too afraid to go outdoors. It was neighbors ready to hit ATMs to help out neighborhood restaurants and businesses deciding not to open – forgoing their income – for fear that ICE agents might drag away their cooks or dishwashers or desk clerks."

"And the best part was this: At a time when we have a president so shameless that he insists on putting his name on every public building he can, these good Samaritans of all colors and creeds **acted without fanfare**. 'There were hundreds of leaders of this movement,' Bill George, a longtime Twin Cities business executive, said to me, 'and I don't know a single one of their names.'"

Minnesota residents stood up – with courage, commitment, and compassion. Everyone did what they could do – driving, organizing, donating, befriending, caring – building resilience far beyond their own households, blocks, neighborhoods, and identities.

But there has, in fact, been fanfare!

The people of the Twin Cities received the prestigious John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for their peaceful resistance and mutual aid in protecting targeted Minnesotans from illegal arrests, incarceration in detention centers, and removal to other countries.

Honoring an entire metropolitan community was a rare and historic decision by the bipartisan committee.

Four Twin Cities community leaders accepted the award on behalf of the region on May 31, 2026, at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. The representatives were

- **Imam Yusuf Abdulle** (Somali American Leadership Table)
- **Natalie Ehret** (Haven Watch)
- **Carolina Ortiz** (COPAL)
- **Zena Stenvik** (Columbia Heights Public Schools)

I am proud to be a Minnesota resident and I salute, with tears in my eyes, the brave people who stood up – and who came from all over the country to stand up in Minnesota.

The 'Minnesota Model' has spread. The *New York Times* reports (June 5, 2026) that in Newark, N.J., demonstrators are protesting conditions at the Delaney Hall ICE detention facility, and at least 63 people were arrested in one week. In New York City, a new coalition called **Hands Off NYC** has trained more than 7,000 volunteers since January to peacefully resist ICE.

We all must stand up.

The 'Quiet' Techniques to *Make America White Again*

The federal government and its supporters are deeply concerned about U.S. demographics for by 2045.

- The White population will be at a tipping point of 50%.
- Christians will make up less than half of the U.S. population by 2045, dropping to **35-46%** by 2070 (Pew Research Center data).

This current administration maintains that the US was founded as a White and Christian country with "traditional values," which was not the case, and its political base supports these issues.

The government has implemented strategies that reinforce white, right-wing Christian, and misogynist values:

- Removing people of color, especially those who are also not Christian;
- Incentivizing population growth among White people;
- Enforcing symbols and messages of Christianity in public places such as schools, government offices, and the military; and
- Removing women and people of color from positions of leadership across government, education, and industry.

Operation Metro Surge was part of this effort, but with the government-sponsored violence and murders in Minnesota and the national backlash, the approach has changed to 'quiet' strategies.

1. Denaturalization court proceedings. On Dec. 24, 2025, the U.S. government directed U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to supply the Department of Justice (DOJ) with **100-200 denaturalization cases per month for fiscal year 2026, up to 2,400 cases for this year.** This is a dramatic increase from the **120 cases filed in the entire 9-year period between 2017 and 2025.** The DOJ has created a specialized "Denaturalization Section" to pursue these cases. The 24 million naturalized citizens in the US fear that they will soon have no legal security.

2. Green card seekers must leave the US to apply, separating hundreds of thousands of families. This policy, announced on May 22, 2026, created significant backlash and some exceptions are expected.

3. Project Homecoming – Self-Deportation: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) gives undocumented immigrants a \$2,600 stipend and a free flight out of the US to encourage self-deportation.

4. Removal of Work Licensure. In March 2026, 200,000 immigrant truck drivers had their commercial drivers' licenses canceled, eliminating their livelihoods.

5. Evictions. People in mixed-status households (e.g., a citizen and a non-citizen) are likely to be evicted from public housing, affecting 20,000 households and up to 80,000 children.

6. Cuts in federally-funded programs. Supports for health care, food aid, and tax benefits have been slashed for immigrants in various categories and specific locations.

7. Mass deportation hearings. Beginning in Minneapolis on June 4, 2026, immigration courts are hearing hundreds of cases a day. In Minneapolis, 100 cases were scheduled for a 30-minute period. Fully 80 of 100 cases on one day had no lawyers present. The federal Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), under the Department of Justice, has provided no information. Without appropriate counsel and process, deportations are rapid and automatic.

As *The Guardian* noted, however, **"The persecution of brown people and mass deportations will not create the white country of far-right fantasy."**

The administration's goal is to remove at least 1,000,000 people every year - quietly. This eviscerates the contracts made between the U.S. government and its residents for social, economic, political, and legal protections and processes guaranteed in the Constitution and in laws passed since 1965 protecting voting and immigration rights.

We share this information with the caveat that the administration launches new rules, policies, and practices with little or no public information or warning. Please check reliable sources for updates.

DEPORTED

DENATURALIZED



Operation Metro Surge:

Violations of International Law and the U.S. Constitution

Federal agents committed at least three international human rights crimes during Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota and in similar immigration actions across the US.

International Crimes.

1. Ethnic cleansing: the expulsion of a population from a given territory using force and intimidation to render an area ethnically homogeneous. The acts comprising it – forcible transfer, murder, and persecution – are illegal under international law, specified as **crimes against humanity** or genocide.

2. Disappearances: The UN Convention for the Protection from Enforced Disappearance defines enforced disappearance as “the arrest, detention, abduction, or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealing the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person.” The Convention states, “**No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, not even war or any other public emergency, justifies enforced disappearance.**”

3. Refoulement: The third international crime is *refoulement*, the forcible sending or return of refugees or asylum-seekers to a country where they may face persecution. *Refoulement* is rooted in UN Conventions on Refugees of 1951, 1954, and 1961.

Although the US has not ratified some of these international treaties, the issues are obligatory under international customary law, which applies to all countries without the process of treaty ratification. Therefore, in these situations, **the US violates either customary international law, a specific treaty, or both.**



Constitutional Crimes.

Non-citizens on U.S. soil have constitutional rights. The 4th, 5th, 10th, and 14th Amendments are foundational to U.S. law and they were violated in the actions of ICE agents in roundups, incarcerations and arrests without due process, and in illegal deportation to other countries.

The 4th protects against unreasonable searches and seizures. The 5th guarantees protections for individuals in legal proceedings.

The 10th reserves powers not granted to the federal government to the states or people.

The 14th guarantees citizenship, due process, and equal protection under the law.

ICE actions violated these amendments.

ICE and Border Patrol are violating the rights of both non-citizens and of U.S. citizens, the rights of those who are native-born and those who are naturalized, meaning those who follow the residency requirements and pass a test to become legal citizens of the US.

Lawsuits. Several states are pursuing laws to enable people to sue federal agents for civil rights abuses during immigration crackdowns. Six states -California, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Illinois - have passed ‘civil rights protection acts’ to hold federal officers accountable.

Federal agents’ impunity allows and encourages more wrongdoing by the federal government, makes our constitutional protections meaningless, and destroys our faith in the federal justice system and in the rule of law, making all of our communities more unsafe. **It is increasingly important for states to act against the federal destruction of constitutional guarantees.**



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Data Centers and Immigration Detention Centers – Overlapping Human Rights and Environmental Abuses

“Rural America has long been where the rest of the country sends what it doesn’t want nearby: prisons, power plants, landfills. These days, two more intrusions have been added: **immigrant detention centers and data centers**” (New York Times, May 2, 2026).

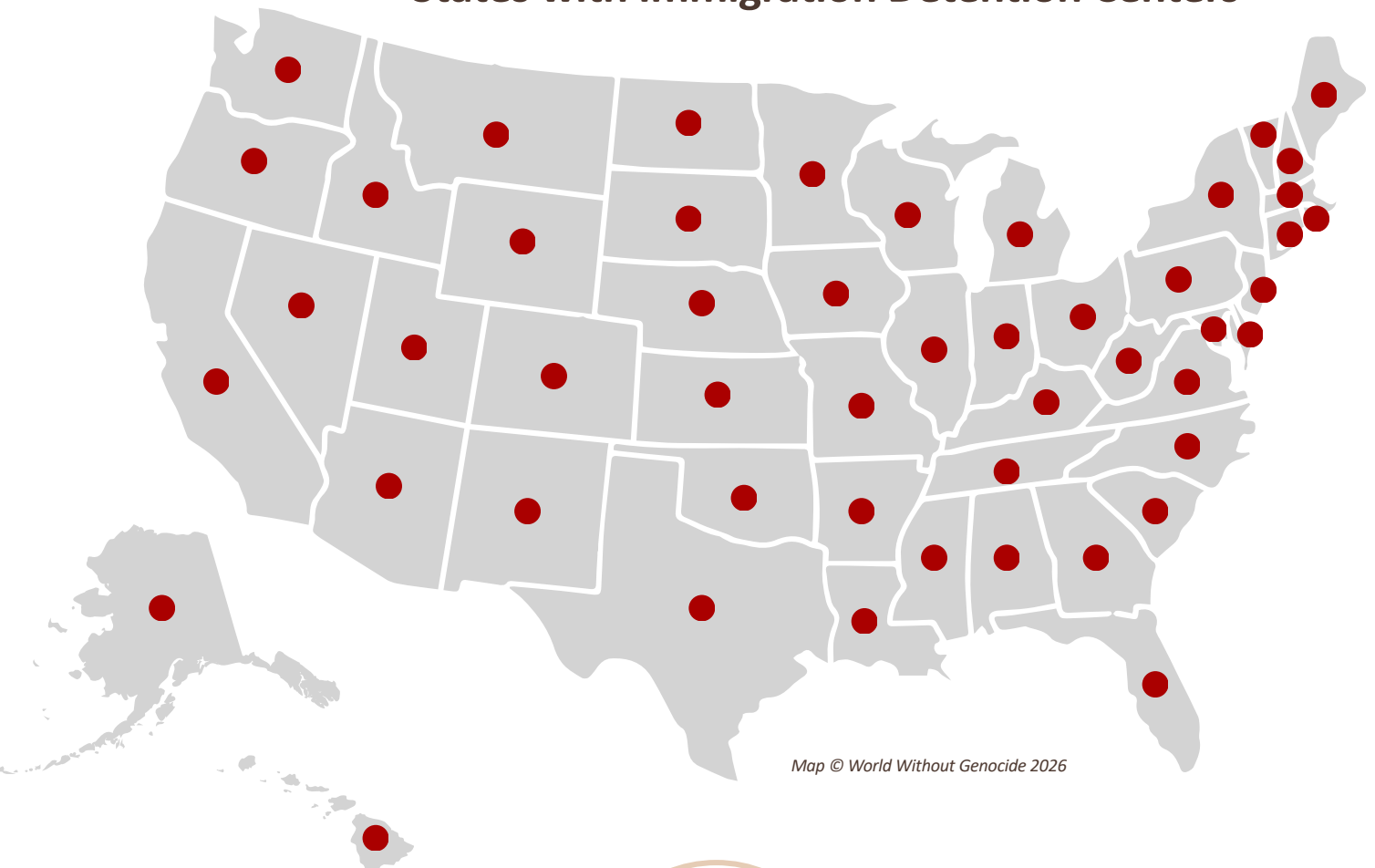
Data centers and immigrant detention centers share significant ethical, environmental, and human rights abuses common to both operations. (ACLU; American Immigration Council).

Rural America is being forced to accommodate more of these facilities. Congress gave ICE \$45 billion for **detention expansion** last year, and by January the detained population had risen roughly 80%, to about 72,000. **Data center land transactions** are averaging 224 acres per year, up 144% since 2022.

To build the data and detention centers, in addition to the land and water depletion and environmental damage, companies are erecting sprawling temporary housing developments, known as “**man camps**,” in rural areas. These places, historically associated with the oil and gas industry and with extractive mining operations, often house thousands of temporary male construction workers and are known to be sites where sex trafficking, sexual abuse, and other criminal activities are rampant.

Rural communities are often fighting both kinds of facilities simultaneously, without knowing who they are fighting because of complicated corporate ownership. The communities are fighting without adequate resources for the battles, because neither the federal government nor private developers are required to tell them anything before decisions are made. It is time to pressure states to require disclosure and to give communities the ability to respond.

States with Immigration Detention Centers



Map © World Without Genocide 2026

CREATING INTERNATIONAL LAW

International law comes from two major sources: **treaty law** and **customary international law**. Both types form the *global legal order*.

1. Treaty law consists of formal written agreements between nations, such as trade deals or arms pacts. Treaties go by many names – convention, charter, protocol, pact, accord, covenant, statute, or agreement.

Creating a treaty involves the following steps:

- **Negotiating** the terms of the treaty. In the US this is done by the Executive Branch, under the President.
- **Signing** the treaty. Once a text is agreed upon, representatives of the negotiating states sign it.
- **Ratifying** the treaty. States that agree to be bound by the treaty ratify it. In the US, according to the Constitution, the President sends the proposed treaty to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. If it votes to approve, the treaty then goes to the Senate, where it needs 67 YES votes to ratify.
- **Depositing** the treaty. The signed and ratified treaty is usually deposited with the UN Secretary-General or a specific host government.

Who is bound by a treaty? It is legally binding on the ratifying states.

2. Customary International Law. Customary international law grows from consistent practices that countries follow – unwritten “rules of the road” for international behavior.

Back-and-Forth. Treaties can become customary international law and vice-versa. **Crimes against humanity; ecocide, and the crime of aggression are currently in the process of being codified into formal treaty law. When customary international law becomes codified as a treaty, the customary rule doesn’t go away. It still binds all states as customary law, separately from the treaty.**

Who is bound by customary international law? Generally, once customary international law establishes a rule, it binds all states. Customary international law is part of U.S. law, affirmed by the Supreme Court in 1900.

There are “super norms” of international law called *jus cogens*. These norms are at the top of the international legal hierarchy, guides to the moral foundation. Many *jus cogens* norms become customary international law because they are so universally and morally significant, the unwritten rules for the moral order.

Violating International Law – Treaties. Any country that is a party to a treaty can accuse another ratifying party of violating that treaty. The UN-administered International Court of Justice in the Netherlands hears cases about treaty violations.

Violating International Law – Customary International Law.

This form of law applies to all states, with few legal exceptions. This means that even if a state hasn’t ratified a treaty, if there is customary law that is relevant, individuals can be held to account at the International Criminal Court or at other international or national courts.

The International Anti-Corruption Court: Standing Up against the Abuse of Power

Grand corruption is **the abuse of public power for private gain by a nation’s leaders**, who are labeled **kleptocrats**. This form of corruption becomes a major barrier to responding effectively to pandemics, fighting the climate crisis, promoting democracy and human rights, establishing international peace and security, and moving towards a more just, rules-based global order.

Grand corruption does not flourish due to a lack of laws. The 192 countries that are party to the UN Convention Against Corruption, including the United States, each criminalize corrupt conduct. **Yet kleptocrats enjoy impunity for their criminal acts of greed because they control the administration of justice – and that means giving themselves impunity – in the countries they rule.**

The initiative for an International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC) began in 2012. **The new Court would address crimes that are already recognized and it would investigate and prosecute the kleptocrats.**

The outcome is that even leaders who are protected by cronies at home can be prosecuted by this court.

In June 2021, more than 125 world leaders from over 45 countries signed the Declaration in Support of the Creation of the IACC, including Nobel laureates, former heads of state and governments, high court justices, former cabinet ministers, business leaders, and representatives of civil society. It is not surprising that the U.S. government has not signed the Declaration. However, the Court is strongly supported by prominent people in the US, including 13 Nobel laureates, more than 30 former government officials, and federal judges, with bipartisan efforts in Congress urging the US to back the initiative.

Abuse of high-level authority has direct and dangerous societal and transnational consequences, including attempts to capture the state itself and to enrich oneself with public resources.



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SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Please visit our website for an extensive listing of programs, materials, advocacy toolkits, and more. We highlight one of our significant resources and a special event.

REMNANTS: A Play about the Holocaust

Henry Greenspan, psychologist, Holocaust scholar, and playwright, will perform REMNANTS.

This brilliant and shocking play has been performed more than 300 times around the world.

It recreates moments from Holocaust survivors when they share an image or event – often to their own surprise – which reflects not only the destruction but its aftermath.

Thursday, December 3, 2026, 7:00 - 8:30 pm CT
St. Catherine University,
The Frey Theater (inside The O'Shaughnessy building)
2004 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul, MN



Register at: www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/remnants

Genocide and Justice: From Nuremberg to the International Criminal Court

This traveling exhibit has been displayed widely throughout the country. The 20 tall standing banners present information about the Holocaust and genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, Darfur; subsequent international trials; and courageous men and women who challenged and changed the global legal system to promote human rights. Recommended for universities, faith organizations, human rights institutions, and public spaces.

Reserve it here:

www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/exhibit



The exhibit on display at the Minnesota State Capitol, 2025.

World Without Genocide is formally associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and is in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations.