



Mikdash:

A Quickstart Guide for Sanctuary Synagogues¹

A Jewish Imperative

The immigrants' fight is our fight. Whether we are moved by *hakhnasat orchim* (welcoming guests), “Love the stranger for you were strangers,” “Do not return a slave who seeks refuge to his master,” our history of repeated expulsions, our own immigration status or that of members of our communities, or contemporary anti-Semitism that shares the same xenophobic roots, Jews heed the call of Torah when we stand with those who face deportation.

The Need for Sanctuary is Urgent

The Trump Administration is ramping up immigration enforcement and deportations. As many as 11 million people living in the United States without legal status—though they may have committed no crime, lived here for years, paid taxes, and be parents of children who are citizens or have been brought here themselves as children—**are currently and immediately at risk of deportation**. The situation is changing rapidly; please coordinate any actions with your local partners.

Synagogues Can Help

In the 1980s, synagogues and churches participating in the Sanctuary movement shielded Central Americans fleeing war. In 2006, the New Sanctuary Movement emerged in response to an increase in deportations and the failure of comprehensive immigration reform. The movement—which has no central organizing body—has been active ever since. Houses of worship are considered “sensitive zones” that immigration agents do not enter (under current procedures). Religious communities can also offer a necessary moral voice, as well as legal, organizing, and advocacy resources.

The First Step

Sanctuary does not happen in a vacuum. If your community wants to become a sanctuary, **first reach out to a local immigrant rights group** to understand local needs and partners. One list of local coalitions is at <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/local-coalitions.html>.

The Second Step

Consult with a lawyer who works in immigration law. To date, no congregation has been prosecuted successfully for acting as a sanctuary, and a number of valid legal arguments support this practice. Still, you should have a relationship with a lawyer who can provide ongoing support. Note: Under federal law, being here without legal status is a civil violation, not a criminal offense.

¹ A fuller guide, being developed in partnership with HIAS, will be released later in spring 2017.

Sanctuary Takes Many Forms: Seven Levels of Response²

Involvement in sanctuary can take place on one or more levels, moving from the broadest and longest-term but least demanding to the most specific, most demanding immediate response:

1. Change federal public decisions by changing hearts and minds.
2. Create a local safety net.
3. Advocate for local policy.
4. Advocate for individuals and families.
5. Provide pastoral and practical support.
6. Provide rapid response.
7. Offer shelter.

Potential Next Steps for Rapid Response (Non-Comprehensive)

- Physically host an immigrant, which may last 24-48 hours, until s/he receives a legal ruling, **or much longer**. Consider all the logistical angles—access to a shower, kitchen, food, laundry, etc.
- Join a “sanctuary cluster,” and provide food, funds, or other aid to a community hosting an immigrant.
- Marshal the legal resources of your community. This may mean offering a legal clinic, or helping lawyers get trained in basic immigration law.
- Write support letters and attend hearings for immigrants facing deportation.
- Work with immigration lawyers to lower and post bond for release from detention.
- Distribute [“Know your Rights”](#) cards in immigrant communities.
- Accompany people to ICE check-ins and hearings, and hold prayer vigils outside. When citizens are watching, immigration agents may behave more cautiously.
- Create a rapid-response team that can document and pray during a raid, discouraging abuse and even stopping detention. This is also known as “Sanctuary in the Streets,” bringing the sanctuary to an immigrant when s/he can’t reach it. See [this toolkit](#) from SanctuaryNotDeportation.

Potential Next Steps: Medium/Long-Term Change

Contact a local immigrant rights group to talk about partnering on legislative or public initiatives.

Further Resources/For More Information

1. [Jewish source sheet from T’ruah](#)
2. [Definitions of Refugee, Asylum Seeker, IDP, and Migrant from HIAS](#)
3. [Sanctuary Cities, Trust Acts, and Community Policing, by the American Immigration Council](#)
4. <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org> is one main source for information.
5. [United We Dream](#) is the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the United States.

Share questions, comments, or updates on your work with us: sanctuary@truah.org, 212-845-5201.

T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights is a network of 1,800 rabbis and cantors from all streams of Judaism that, together with the Jewish community, act on the Jewish imperative to respect and advance the human rights of all people. Grounded in Torah and our Jewish historical

² Thanks to Rev. Alexia Salvatierra for providing this list.

experience and guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we call upon Jews to assert Jewish values by raising our voices and taking concrete steps to protect and expand human rights in North America, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territories.