



## **IRATE**

### **Interfaith Refugee Action Team - Elizabeth**

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**IRATE** (the Interfaith Refugee Action Team - Elizabeth) is an alliance of grassroots organizations, located in the Metro New York-New Jersey area, whose members believe that the current U.S. policy of detaining noncriminal asylum seekers and undocumented economic refugees in prison-like conditions is contrary to our tradition of welcoming refugees. Currently in New Jersey, the Bureau of Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE), has some 300 people detained at the Elizabeth Detention Center in Elizabeth, NJ, and an unknown number of people in county jails throughout the state.

Members of IRATE seek to change the U.S. policy of imprisoning noncriminal asylum seekers and economic refugees through education and advocacy. We also try to provide support and welcome by training volunteers to visit those held in detention. And, we work with the Bergen County Sanctuary Committee to provide community-based alternatives to detention.



*The U.S. has turned its back on asylum seekers*

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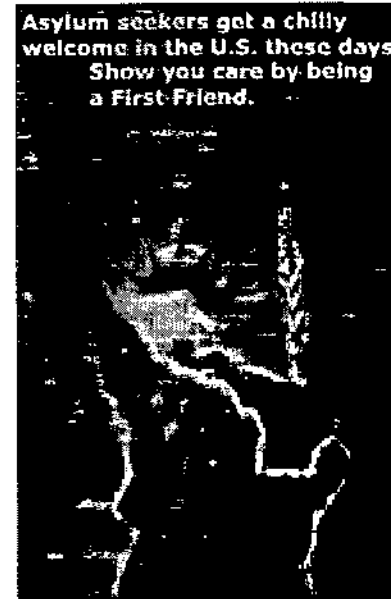
About  
Detention

Stamp Out  
Despair

First Friends is an organization of volunteers who visit people detained at the Elizabeth Detention Center (EDC). Many detainees know no one in the United States, so a First Friends visitor may be their only link to the outside. First Friends provides training sessions so prospective volunteers understand what to expect when visiting detained refugees at the Elizabeth Detention Center. New visitors will be matched with a more experienced visitor who will accompany them on their first visit(s). Volunteer visitors are matched with detainees who have let First Friends know that they wish to have a visitor.

Training for volunteer visitors is held on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the First Friends office, 321 South Broad Street in Elizabeth, NJ. Please contact us by phone (908-965-0455) or e-mail (firstfriends2@juno.com) to let us know you will be attending the training. The office is open most days from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM. You can always leave a message and your call will be returned.

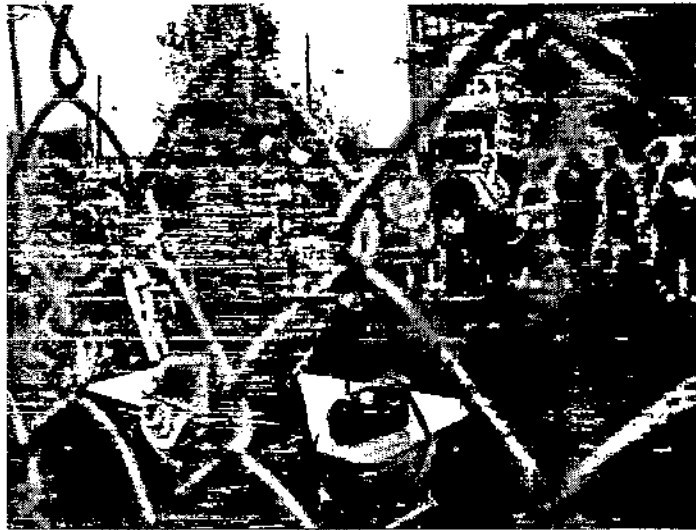
In addition to the visitors' program, First Friends supports those detained at the EDC through Project Stamp Out Despair. Twice a year, Stamp Out Despair provides detainees with gifts of writing materials to help them stay in contact with family and friends and to let them know there are people in the U.S. who care about their plight. It's a great project for schools, religious groups, and other organizations to get involved with.





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IRATE believes that changes in our immigration laws are necessary to bring about more just treatment of asylum seekers and economic refugees. We support legislation that respects the dignity of all who come to our country whether seeking asylum or to better their economic status. We encourage you to use the following links to follow fast changing developments in immigration

legislation.

The following two sites provide tools for sending e-mail to your legislator regarding immigration reforms well as information on the legislation:

[Network's Legislative Action Alert Center](#)

[American Immigration Lawyers Legislative & Advocacy Center](#)

For further information on immigration bills and immigration justice please see the following:

[National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#)

[Detention Watch Network](#)

[Justice for Immigrants](#)