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## Immigrants blast Butler sheriff

*From Post wire reports*

HAMILTON - Immigrants' rights groups have banded together in the face of the Butler County sheriff's decision to detain 18 illegal immigrants rounded up at a construction site, calling the move grandstanding and an attempt to intimidate employers and illegal immigrants.

The detainees were arrested May 18 and released later that day, but the groups and the American Civil Liberties Union say the sheriff overstepped his bounds, infringing on duties reserved for federal immigration officials.

"It's a national problem that requires a national solution, not vigilante activity. And that's really all the Butler County sheriff is doing," said Scott Greenwood, an attorney for the ACLU.

Sheriff Rick Jones has come under fire since deputies responded to a call about a potential fight between Mexican and American construction workers at a building site in Wayne Township on May 18.

When they arrived at the scene, deputies loaded 18 Hispanic men on a bus and took them to the sheriff's office, where they were questioned and later released. Jones said none of the men had valid identification papers and that some were carrying obvious forgeries.

Even though the men were released, immigration rights activists question whether Jones had the right to detain the men at all.

Last week, deputies, acting on information Jones said was obtained during the May 18 roundup, raided Carmona Construction in Fairfield Township and seized a computer and computer data storage devices.

The Cincinnati U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement office has federal jurisdiction over immigration issues in Butler County. Local authorities generally only take suspected illegal aliens into custody if they are being charged with violating state law.

The sheriff maintains that immigration officials are stretched too thin to control his county's swelling immigrant population. He also said his office can investigate because he thinks state tax law might have been broken.

At a news conference Sunday, immigration rights groups claimed Jones' deputies harass Hispanic workers and threatened to pull over Hispanic-looking people to check for valid driver's licenses.

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"Serious people are engaged in debating a solution to the issues of this broken immigrant system. ... He is engaged in intimidating the community and grandstanding. Immigration is a federal issue. There's a process for local authorities to be authorized to enforce immigration law. As far as we know, the sheriff of Butler County has not gone through this process," said Jeff Stewart of the Immigrant Worker Project.

Stewart said many local law enforcement agencies shy away from immigration issues out of concern that immigrants are less likely to report a crime if they think the local authorities are going to detain or deport them.

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