



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contacts:** PaKou Her  
816.853.9927  
[pakou@18millionrising.org](mailto:pakou@18millionrising.org)

Cayden Mak  
248.229.9005  
[cayden@18millionrising.org](mailto:cayden@18millionrising.org)

### **18MillionRising.org (18MR) Launches #EIPaso37 Campaign to Release Punjabi Asylum Seekers, Joins Forces With Community Groups**

April 23, 2014 – In late spring of 2013, more than forty Sikh men – all of them members of a minority political party from the Punjab region – fled India because they feared for their lives. In a journey that zig-zagged around the globe, they finally arrived in the United States seeking safety and freedom. Instead, they have languished for nearly a year at the El Paso Immigration and Customs Enforcement Processing Center.

Despite proving credible fear and providing the necessary identity documents required to begin asylum proceedings, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Department has continued to deny these detainees their rights to due process. On April 6, 2014, 37 of the Sikh detainees protested this denial by initiating a hunger strike, leading to several hospitalizations and government sanctioned intimidation tactics – including ICE calling in the Indian Consulate General with the intent to break the hunger strike through intimidation and threats of deportation.

[18MillionRising launched the #EIPaso37 campaign](#) to both increase pressure on ICE to release these detainees, and to boost media coverage of this story. On April 16, 2014, ten days after it began, the hunger strike ended amid promises from ICE that the detainees' paperwork would quickly move forward. Thus far, 1 detainee has been paroled and 2 others have been granted a change of venue in efforts to increase their odds of being released. (The El Paso facility is notorious for thwarting asylum proceedings.) While it's clear that these three parole and venue change cases are in direct response 18MR's #EIPaso37 campaign and public outcry, over 30 more detainees remain trapped in El Paso – many of whom have little or no legal representation.

Together with community groups, 18MR continues to fight for the rights of these Sikh detainees to access due process. Starting today, 18MR will partner with United We Dream to kickoff a [3-day protest](#), during which community members, activists, and organizers from across the country will inundate ICE with phone calls expressing concern about and demanding the release of the #EIPaso37. 18MR is also partnering with the Jakara Movement to provide social media coverage for a caravan of young South Asian students who will drive from Northern California to El Paso, culminating in a protest outside the El Paso Immigration and Customs Enforcement Processing Center on Saturday, April 26, at 12:00 P.M. Central Time.

We can't tell the world that the United States is a nation committed to justice when we turn away those who are most in need of our government's protection. When did imprisoning asylees for months at a time and



denying them due process become the way we “protect” those who flee their home countries out of fear, starvation, or persecution?

We choose to raise our voices on behalf of those whose voices are being systematically silenced. We are determined to fight for the release of these unlawfully detained asylum seekers.

NOTE: To stay abreast of this campaign and/or to follow the livestream of this Saturday’s protest in El Paso, please go to [18MillionRising.org](http://18MillionRising.org). You may also find a full list of organizational campaign partners [here](#).

---

**About 18MillionRising.org (18MR):** 18MR is an unprecedented Asian American Pacific Islander online organizing and civic engagement organization that leverages the power of technology and social media to build power and community. 18MR is comprised of a network of AAPI activists, artists, organizations, and digital media influencers, ranging from community based organizations and print magazines to Asian American blogs and YouTube channels. During the 2012 election cycle, 18MR built and distributed online voter registration tools, ran social media-fueled civic engagement campaigns, and provided up-to-date information and analysis on all things political that affect AAPI communities. Since last year, 18MR has been running online campaigns and standing up for the voices and struggles of AAPIs. The young national online organization even took on Google. And won.