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ACLU of Southern California Learns Immigrants Are Forcibly Drugged for Deportation (5/8/2007)

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### **Two Men Given Powerful Drugs Against Their Will**

LOS ANGELES - The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California has learned that two immigrants were forcibly sedated by the United States government. Raymond Soeoth and Amadou Diouf, clients in an ACLU of Southern California lawsuit, revealed that they had both been drugged involuntarily during attempts to deport them.

Diouf was under court protection from deportation when officers put him on an airplane for return to his native Senegal. When he attempted to protest to the flight captain, he was sedated against his will.

While undergoing deportation Soeoth, a Christian minister from Indonesia, was drugged by guards even after he explained he did not want to be sedated.

In the end, neither man was deported. Both men were released last February after approximately two years in a federal facility in San Pedro as part of a lawsuit in which the ACLU of Southern California has won the release of more than a dozen people held indefinitely in violation of federal rules.

“These druggings were medically unnecessary, immoral, and dangerous,” said ACLU of Southern California Staff Attorney Ahilan Arulanantham, who represents Diouf and Soeoth. “Officers sedated these perfectly sane men, apparently just to silence them. The routine nature of these actions raises serious questions about how common this practice is.”

An article published today in the Los Angeles Daily Journal documents the men’s experiences. The reporter learned about the drugging during interviews with Diouf and Soeoth.

Medical experts consulted by the ACLU of Southern California say the drugs used on Soeoth, Haldol and Cogentin, are used to treat psychosis and should not have been prescribed for someone with no history of mental illness. A federal policy prohibits medication of detainees “solely to facilitate transport, unless a medical professional determines that they present a danger to themselves or to others.”

The ACLU said that is a loose medical standard that is open to abuse.

“It is frightening that the government is using anti-psychotic drugs on immigrants who have no history of mental illness,” Arulanantham said.

The ACLU of Southern California is aggressively investigating the practice with the pro-bono assistance of the law firm Munger, Tolles, and Olson LLP.

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