

**Wednesday, July 17, 2019**

**FULL RESPONSE from PETITION ORGANIZERS**

**Re: July 2019 Document from Akal Security Management Team**

The organizers of the petition effort have reviewed a document titled “Akal Security – A Values-based, Ethically Responsible Business” and have unease about its content. Our concerns are substantial enough that we are not shifting our position with regard to Akal Security and its contract with ICE, nor our position toward SSSCorp entities that may or may not benefit from or support Akal.

Our petition, which was first published one year ago, states that we call on

- “SSSCorp and Akal Security to eliminate any business relationships, associations, and contracts associated with the detention of human beings in the prison-industrial complex, which disproportionately affects communities of color including immigrants and now asylum seekers.”
- “SSSCorp to immediately establish a system of transparency by which the members of our community may review the fiscal practices between the SSSCorp and its associated for-profit and non-profit businesses for the sole purpose of evaluating the source of financing.”

The petition now has more than 625 signatures, half of which have been added in the past month, after Dr. Fania Davis, 2019 Peace Prayer Day keynote speaker, expressed solidarity with our cause. We would like to see SSSCorp follow the example of banks (Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and others) and cities (Chicago, Oakland, and others) which have divested from all affiliations with ICE.

The PDF document attributed to the Akal Management Team began circulating among members of the 3HO/SDI community through email and direct message on Friday, July 12, 2019. We waited to formulate a response to Akal’s statement until we successfully verified the authenticity of the document, which is not on letterhead, not dated, and provides no contact information. The document does not mention our campaign for change, however it followed a groundswell of protest to Akal’s contract with ICE that erupted on social media after 2019 Summer Solstice.

Therefore, we take issue with the following:

- The statement does not refer to or explain the financial relationship between Akal’s profit and the nonprofit entities, nor does it acknowledge any subcontracted work.
- The statement confirms that Akal has one contract at Krome, an ICE detention facility in Florida, which makes it complicit in ICE’s policy of separating children from parents.
- The statement does not address how work in the prison-industrial complex disproportionately harms Black and Brown communities and we have no way of knowing if the men in the facility have had children taken from them and the very fact that these men are detained separates them from their families.
- The statement attempts to position Akal as a model of “Sikh culture” and anti-discrimination practices to justify incarcerating other marginalized groups.

**TRANSPARENCY**

The Akal management team “assures you that we have not and will not participate in any separation and border enforcement or removal actions.” This claim is not sufficient without sharing data to explain how Akal Security can be certain it has handled no parents given the fact that the government has not properly tracked separated families. Furthermore, Akal employees guard immigrants in a private facility with little to no accountability nor requirement of transparency to the nonprofits or the public. Due to this complicated activity, we restate our call for SSSCorp to create immediate transparency in its

operations between the for-profits and the Kundalini Yoga/Sikh Dharma community. We want to know how funds travel and are distributed within the corporate structure, a process that is not clear to anyone outside the executive boards.

## NATURE OF THE WORK

Because of the lack of transparency and little to no communication or substantiation from the company, much confusion about the exact nature and scope of Akal's work remains. According to the statement:

- *The only people in the Krome facility are those who "have been convicted of a crime by U.S. law."* The prison-industrial complex profits from minor laws (such as vagrancy laws) in order to justify its arrest and detention of Black and Brown folk. In this case, Section 1325 of U.S. Immigration Code is invoked to criminalize immigration from Mexico in particular. Lawmakers, such as Julian Castro, are currently challenging this section of U.S. law as the basis for detaining migrants at the border. The idea that Krome detains "criminals only" is not a consolation since not all laws are just.
- *Krome does not detain migrants from the border but those who have been in the States and were detained for "criminal activity."*

Again, this term is loosely and liberally applied to Black and Brown individuals. Further, we are troubled by the increase in announcements of immigrant raids and the fact that Akal could guard individuals who have established lives and families in the U.S.

- *Detainees are housed at Krome while their status is being adjudicated.* The lengths of time such adjudication takes (sometimes years) makes this statement troubling. We would want to know if there are any upper limits to the amount of time a detainee would be held. In 2015, Krome detainees went on hunger strike after extensive wait times for their bond hearings.
- *Akal "has had zero involvement with border operations, enforcement action, immigration raids or the separation of families."*

The verb tense of this sentence is noted (has had). Akal also provided Aviation Security Officers for deportations until at least December 2017, and we do not know if that subcontract continued into the zero-tolerance era. The administration policies are volatile, unpredictable, and intensifying, but Akal has declared no exit strategy if their role changes. In fact, an Akal official shared with us a few months ago that the company is currently seeking out new ICE contracts.

## SIKH VALUES

The statement seeks to position Akal as a model of "Sikh culture" with a limited view of Sikh culture in the context of colonial and modern India and in the U.S. It uses the language of fairness and social justice by stating that "Akal was born from the fight against discrimination." Using Sikh minority status to justify the oppression of other marginalized groups does not align with Sikh values and lacks solidarity with other oppressed peoples. Sikh culture has a history of welcoming refugees. Even if Akal's operations are completely above board – and there are documented reports to the contrary -- Akal is a part of the mass deportation and incarceration infrastructure, and therefore complicit in and profiting from the escalating mistreatment of migrant detainees.

**We ask that our global community of kundalini yoga teachers, students, and Sikhs continue to raise awareness, speak out, ask questions, and pursue answers about this issue. Learn about our grassroots effort at [akalandice.weebly.com](http://akalandice.weebly.com) and join the discussion on the Akal and ICE Petition Page on Facebook.**

**Sign the petition (links on Facebook and website) | Share widely on social media | Stay informed  
CONTACT: Fatehbir Kaur or Dr. Kimberly Nao at [akalandicepetition@gmail.com](mailto:akalandicepetition@gmail.com)**