
Judge Bars Federal Agents from Targeting Peaceful Immigration Protesters



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LOS ANGELES, Jan. 18— A U.S. federal judge has ordered immigration agents to stop using pepper spray, making arrests, or detaining individuals who are peacefully protesting immigration enforcement operations in Minnesota.

U.S. District Judge Kate Menendez issued a preliminary injunction on Friday limiting the conduct

of federal agents involved in Operation Metro Surge in the Minneapolis area. The order will remain in effect until the operation concludes and applies to all participating federal personnel. The injunction prohibits agents from using force or detaining people solely for peacefully observing or protesting enforcement activities. It also bars agents from stopping vehicles that are lawfully following enforcement operations without reasonable suspicion of criminal conduct. Operation Metro Surge began in early December 2025 with around 2,000 agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, later expanding to nearly 3,000. The Department of Homeland Security has described it as the largest immigration enforcement operation in U.S. history.

Judge Menendez said protesters were likely to succeed in demonstrating violations of constitutional rights, including free speech and protections against unreasonable searches. The ruling followed a lawsuit filed by the Minnesota branch of the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of six individuals.