NARSOL Calls on Florida Law Enforcement to Provide Shelter for Anyone in Need

Albuquerque, NM | September 9, 2017—Rumors have spread that have since been verified that American citizens on state maintained sex-offender registries—most of whom are no longer under any form of court-sanctioned supervision or probation—will not be allowed to seek shelter from the violent weather that is soon to ravage most of south and central Florida.

NARSOL appeals to the humanity of those in decision-making positions in the states and jurisdictions likely to be affected by Hurricane Irma: Do everything humanly possible to accommodate and protect our nation's most marginalized population of citizens or be prepared to defend against legal action if citizens are ripped from their families or denied shelter.

 "FEMA is bending over backwards to ensure that shelters under its jurisdiction don't allow such an abundance of law enforcement personnel that illegal aliens seeking shelter from the storms are worried about being round up and deported. Yet, registered sex offenders are American citizens! They should be treated at least as well as illegal aliens." asked Brenda Jones, Executive Director of the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL).

Louisiana has very specific directives for housing those on the registry in an evacuation situation. RS29:726(i) states: "That a registered sexual offender shall not knowingly be housed or sheltered in shelters, hotels, Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer parks, or any other housing funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency where the general population of evacuees is staying."*

"Can you imagine?" asked Jones. "Is this what happens in every state? People are already facing the loss of their homes and they don't know what is going to happen, and now they can't even stay with their children and don't even know if they are safe? That's unbelievably cruel and inhumane."

Sources in Louisiana say that such children are given into the care of other family members, and if there are none, are temporarily made wards of the state.

But perhaps the most egregious example of local law enforcement's use of the storms as a means to intimidate registered sex offenders comes out of Polk County, Florida. Sheriff Grady Judd has announced on Facebook and Twitter that citizens on the state's registry will not be allowed into shelters.*

This follows numerous stories that have emerged in Texas about registered citizens on probation and parole who have been rounded up and imprisoned at jail and prison facilities which were unprepared to feed and provide the most basic of services, even safety, for them.*

Both Texas' and Florida's "plans" for sheltering evacuees who are on the sex offender registry are

insufficient. A 2012 research study shows that FEMA is tasked with seeing to the safety of citizens in emergency situations. The study reveals that such plans for the "general population" and for those with medical and functional needs are handled through FEMA, but the plans for those designated as "sex offenders" are left to state and local jurisdictions.*

http://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/Law.aspx?d=85672
http://www.wftv.com/news/local/where-do-evacuated-sex-offenders-go-during-hurricane/604783140
https://narsol.org/2017/09/reasonable-shelter-denied-to-registrants-facing-horrific-storm/
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262637447_Sheltering_Registered_Sex_Offenders_in_Disasters_2012

# # #