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Fighting deportation: Father charged with DUI is not legal resident

By Kristi L. Nelson

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Family members of Jimenez Juan Andres — common-law wife Maria, center, and daughters Rosi, 16, left, and Gabriela, 18 — become emotional during a news conference media Monday at the Knox County Detention Center. Andres was arrested Thursday on DUI and other charges and is being held for immigration officials and faces possible deportation. (J. MILES CARY/NEWS SENTINEL)

It was a hastily called news conference, with a daughter's tearful plea, a dozen supporters with signs, and a bank of cameras ready to capture a family's anguish.

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Jimenez Juan Andres

“My dad didn’t do anything wrong but come to this country,” 18-year-old Gabriela Andres said Monday outside the Knox County Sheriff’s Office Detention Center. “He thinks this is his home.”

Her father, Jimenez Juan Andres, 41, is being held at the detention center for the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement after being arrested Thursday by Knoxville Police Department officers on charges of driving under the influence, speeding, and driving without a license, registration or proof of insurance. Because the DUI is a first offense — Andres has no previous criminal history in Knox County — all the charges are misdemeanors. Were he not undocumented and being held for ICE, he could bond out for \$2,000.

Andres’ family said he came to the U.S. in 1987, fleeing the civil war that raged in his native Guatemala. He initially had paperwork giving him political asylum, his family said, but lost it when his wallet was stolen and has

been unable to navigate the bureaucracy to get replacement papers.

Local pro-immigrant group Comite Popular de Knoxville said Andres is the face of families torn apart by immigration laws.

“We’re not just a number in a file,” Gabriela Andres said. “We’re a family that’s being separated.”

Besides Gabriela, Andes has two other children, 16 and 20, and has been with their mother, who is here legally, for more than 20 years. His children are legal citizens; his daughter said Andres’ mother and siblings also reside in the U.S. legally.

The family approached Comite Popular de Knoxville for help, said member Alejandro Guizar, and it called on social-justice advocates for the impromptu rally. The year-old organization is known for its opposition to KCSO’s proposed partnership with the federal 287(g) program, which trains local law-enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws.

“This is an example of what is happening all the time: people stopped for a misdemeanor, and then they get deported — for what?” asked Walter Davis of Allies for Knoxville.

KCSO spokeswoman Martha Dooley said the sheriff’s office could not say whether Andres will be deported. A call to ICE went unanswered.



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Gabriela Andres describes the plight of her father Jimenez Juan Andres, who is undocumented and facing DUI and other misdemeanor charges, during a news conference Monday at the Knox County Detention Center. (J. MILES CARY/NEWS SENTINEL)

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