

Orozco-Ramirez

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Statewide prayer vigils held for alleged MT jail rape victim

By [DAN BOYCE](#) ([/PEOPLE/DAN-BOYCE/](#))

Credit Dan Boyce

Shahid Haque Hausrath, (left) Attorney for alleged rape victim Audemio Orozco-Ramires, lights a candle at a prayer vigil for his client.



3:07

Hear the radio version of this story from "Montana Evening Edition"

A prayer vigil was held Tuesday night at Helena's First United Church of Christ for a Mexican man who says he was raped while in custody at a Montana jail in October.

A series of such vigils are being held around the state

Undocumented immigrant Audemio Orozco-Ramirez was detained after a routine traffic stop in Sidney, Montana.

The vigils seek justice and solace for Orozco-Ramirez and his family. His lawyer wonders if Orozco-Ramirez will be deported before the case can be heard.

A group of maybe 10 people stood in a circle at the Helena vigil, hearing from local religious leaders and hearing more about the story of Audemio Orozco-Ramirez.

His lawyer, Shahid Haque-Hausrath described how on October 4th, Orozco-Ramirez was a passenger in a car driving in Sidney, Montana which was pulled over for speeding.

“Normally, when a vehicle is pulled over for speeding the driver might be given a ticket and the passenger would never be asked any questions,” he said. “But that’s not what happened here.”

Haque-Hausrath alleges the Sidney Police Department has a policy in place to check the immigration status of latinos as a standard procedure. The Sidney Police Department denies there is such a policy.

Orozco-Ramirez was detained and was in the process of being deported in the early morning hours of October 5th.

“On his first night in detention in the Jefferson County Jail in Boulder, Montana, he was the victim of a violent sexual assault,” Hauque-Hausrath said.

Orozco-Ramirez wasn’t able to report the alleged rape for a couple more days, when he spoke to a Spanish-speaking official at an Idaho detention facility.

Haque-Hausrath says it took days to convince customs officials not to deport him.

“You guys can’t deport this guy while you’re investigating this sexual assault. If you deport him, you’re never going to be able to seek justice for what happened to him,” he said.

But Haque Hausrath said it all seems open-ended right now, how long officials will wait before deportation.

“We don’t know whether they’re gonna deport him once they get some kind of preliminary conclusion on anything, we don’t really know what we’re dealing with,” he said.

Customs officials say they take allegations of sexual assault seriously and are working closely with the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office as well as conducting their own investigation.

Orozco-Ramirez was released from jail 12 days after his arrest.

Now, in the meantime Haque-Hausrath says his client is a man with a wife and seven children who is not allowed to work to feed them—a man who has been in the US for 20 years, albeit illegally.

Haque-Hausrath says he himself doesn’t know if prayer works, but he’s sure vigils like this can have impact.

“If you’re praying for him that means you’re thinking about him,” he said.

Another vigil has already been held in Billings. Others are planned for Butte and Bozeman, with more in the works.

TAGS: [Audemio Orozco-Ramirez \(/term/audemio-orozco-ramirez\)](/term/audemio-orozco-ramirez) [Shahid Haque-Hausrath \(/term/shahid-haque-hausrath-o\)](/term/shahid-haque-hausrath-o) [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(/term/immigration-and-customs-enforcement\)](/term/immigration-and-customs-enforcement) [Jefferson County Jail \(/term/jefferson-county-jail\)](/term/jefferson-county-jail)

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