

COVID-19 IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION

Monthly Analysis & Update

October 22, 2020

Freedom for Immigrants (FFI) hosts an interactive detention map that includes real time mapping of Immigration and Custom Enforcement's (ICE) response to COVID-19. The map is populated with information drawn from news reports, publicly available databases, survey responses, and reporting from our National Detention Hotline¹ and independent member and affiliate organizations in the Freedom for Immigrants (FFI) visitation network.² We recognize the effort and risk that goes into documenting this information and appreciate all who contribute, most importantly those who have shared their experience while detained in the U.S. immigration system.

Executive Summary

Information included in this update was collected between September 29 and October 22. During this period, ICE conducted COVID-19 testing at a higher rate and reported a continued rise in confirmed cases. However, Freedom for Immigrants continued to receive reports of ICE refusing to perform tests for individuals exposed to the virus or presenting as symptomatic and noted lags and irregularities in ICE's public reporting. For these reasons, we remain concerned that ICE's data and the true rate of transmission of COVID-19 in ICE detention is much higher than publicly reported. ICE continues to adopt an inconsistent approach to testing overall. In the instances where Freedom for Immigrants documented mass testing at specific facilities, this testing was made available following discrete purposes: i) to comply with a court order that mandated mass testing at a given facility; ii) to negate a court order limiting the agency's ability to transfer people into a given facility; or iii) in direct response to public pressure campaigns for a given facility. There were no systematic efforts to trace and contain COVID-19 in immigration detention. FFI continued to receive widespread reports of people who had tested positive for COVID-19 being held alongside people who had tested negative or had not been tested at all, as well as reports of solitary confinement being used in lieu of proper medical isolation in ICE facilities across the country— in direct contradiction to the advice of public health and humanitarian protection efforts. Enforcement increased significantly during this period, resulting in increased book-ins to ICE custody, as well as the re-detention of several people who had previously been granted release from ICE custody due to underlying medical vulnerabilities to COVID-19. Transfers continued

¹ The Freedom for Immigrants National Detention Hotline is a dedicated phone line where immigrants in ICE detention, as well as their loved ones or advocates, can reach FFI trained volunteers; in response to COVID-19, our volunteers now conduct a specialized intake designed to assess the readiness and efficacy of COVID-19 response measures in each ICE facility.

² Freedom for Immigrants convenes a national network of local visitation programs around the country focused on human rights monitoring, advocacy, and abolition. The network includes approximately 4500 volunteers who support people detained and their families in over 50 immigrant prisons and jails in nearly 30 states.

from local, state, and federal jails and prisons to ICE detention, as well as between ICE facilities, despite the Department of Homeland Security's own admission that transfers have caused the virus to spread. ICE used transfers as a tool to facilitate mass deportations by moving people, often across state lines, to consolidate immigrants from specific national groups in one facility prior to their deportation flight. During this period, ICE carried out the mass deportations of Black immigrants, including immigrants from Haiti, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many of those subjected to deportation reported that they were coerced into signing their deportation papers by use of force, including severe beatings, use of pepper spray, and torture. ICE deported six individuals who had formally lodged a complaint with DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties calling for an investigation into these allegations, augmenting concerns that ICE is actively working to deport witnesses to crimes. Freedom for Immigrants continues to express concern for the safety of those who were deported, especially the asylum seekers who were seeking international protection and are now in the custody of Cameroonian state security forces. During this period, ICE began to release people from the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in Adelanto, California, in compliance with a judicial order mandating that the facility dramatically reduce detention levels. At the same time, FFI documented continued barriers to release, including deliberate efforts on the part of ICE to obstruct release on bond. During this period, ICE did not report the deaths of anyone in custody. However, newly published data indicates that at least 17 people in pre-trial U.S. Marshals Service custody died of complications due to COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic, including at facilities co-located with ICE, and potentially including people awaiting hearings for immigration related offenses. The U.S. Marshals Service has never and is not presently reporting information regarding COVID-19 transmission or infection rates among the people who are held in the agency's custody, including immigrants. FFI continues to express concern that the true fatality rate due to COVID-19 in detention is higher than publicly reported by ICE due to lack of information on the fate of people who contracted COVID-19 while in detention and were then released, including people who were released while very ill. Conditions in ICE detention remain dire, and FFI continues to receive widespread reports of medical neglect and abuse, failure on the part of ICE and contract staff to follow public health guidelines, and retaliation for internal organizing. During this period, FFI received an uptick in reports of inadequate access to food and a general degradation in facility cleanliness and hygiene.

Increase in Confirmed COVID-19 Cases Inside Immigration Detention

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in ICE detention continues to increase. The largest current reported outbreak of COVID-19 reported by ICE is at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California**, and ICE reports regional clusters, with active cases of COVID-19 confirmed across multiple facilities in **Louisiana, Georgia, Arizona, and Texas**. Unlike in past reports, FFI did not note any dramatic decreases in the number of "COVID-19 positive cases currently in custody under isolation or monitoring" within short periods of time. However, ICE also reported comparatively fewer positive cases of COVID-19 reported overall during this period than in the months

of September and August. **FBI continues to express concern that ICE’s reporting on the true rate of COVID-19 transmission in its facilities is inaccurate.** ICE’s public reporting on confirmed cases of COVID-19 continues to exclude reporting on COVID-19 cases among its contract staff or to provide updated information regarding COVID-19 testing among its direct-hire staff. FBI continues to document numerous inconsistencies in ICE’s reporting on confirmed cases of COVID-19, including unexplained decreases in the reported number of cumulative cases reported at several facilities.

ICE’s Reporting of Confirmed Cases

As of October 22, ICE confirmed 6,743 positive cases of COVID-19 across 99 facilities since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. **This represents an increase of 598 cases since FBI’s last update on September 28.** In contrast, FBI documented an increase of 1,895 cases during a six-week period from August 14 – September 28; and an increase of 1,035 cases during a four-week period from July 17 – August 13.¹ FBI attributes this decrease in reported positive cases in part to continued barriers on access to testing and an uneven approach to testing between facilities (see below section on *Testing* for additional analysis).

ICE continued to report on the total number of “confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring.” **As of October 22, ICE reported 661 cases of COVID-19 at 57 facilities.** The highest concentration of confirmed cases reported by ICE “currently under isolation or monitoring” in facilities designed to detain people for 72 hours or more are: the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** (with 115 current reported cases of COVID-19 and 221 over time); Jackson Parish Correctional Center in **Jonesboro, Louisiana** (with 56 current reported cases of COVID-19 and 109 over time); the Richwood Correctional Center in **Monroe, Louisiana** (with 43 current reported cases of COVID-19 and 117 over time); and the River Correctional Center in **Ferriday, Louisiana** (with 41 current reported cases and 56 over time).

ICE also reported several regional clusters of COVID-19 – in which it confirmed active cases of COVID-19 across several facilities in a state. As of October 22, reported regional clusters of COVID-19 in **Louisiana** (with 189 active cases of COVID-19 reported across seven facilities); **Arizona** (with 62 active of COVID-19 reported across four facilities); **Georgia** (with 49 active cases of COVID-19 across four facilities); and **Texas** (with 124 active cases of COVID-19 reported across 23 facilities).

In several instances, the number of COVID-19 cases confirmed by ICE rose dramatically in a short period of time, while in other facilities ICE reported no increases over a month period, including in facilities where people in detention and advocates report widespread COVID-19 symptoms, raising questions about how the agency prioritizes testing.

- From September 29 to October 20, the number of active cases of COVID-19 ICE reported at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** spiked from 73 to 221.

- Meanwhile, the nearby Otay Mesa Detention Facility in **San Diego, California** has not reported an increase in confirmed cases since September 18, continuing to report 170 cases. As we document below in *Continued Limitations to Test Access*, we have received reports from Otay Mesa documenting refusal to provide tests requested by people with COVID-19 symptoms.

As of October 22, ICE reported 45 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff assigned to its jails and prisons – **a number that ICE has not updated since June 18. ICE continues to exclude reporting on confirmed cases of COVID-19 among its contract staff**, despite numerous calls from advocates, medical professionals, and members of Congress to provide this information.

Continued Omissions, Inconsistencies and Inaccuracies in ICE Reporting

FFI continued to document omissions, inconsistencies and inaccuracies in ICE’s reporting on current or cumulative cases of COVID-19 at specific facilities. In FFI’s September COVID-19 report, we included a list of instances in which ICE reported active cases of COVID-19 among people in its custody at facilities that do not appear on the agency’s official Facility Locator.ⁱⁱ This list remains unchanged and includes the Golden State Annex in **McFarland, California**; Moore Detention Facility in **Texas**; San Juan Staging Facility in **Puerto Rico**; and Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center in **South Carolina**.

ICE still does not provide information on how the agency determines to remove a person from its tally of “COVID-19 cases currently in custody, under isolation, or monitoring.” In previous reports, FFI document widespread instances in which reported rates of current COVID-19 cases decreased dramatically in short amounts of time, raising **serious concerns that these reported decreases in current cases of COVID-19 were based on a person’s release from custody, deportation, or due to an absence of COVID-19 symptoms, instead of negative tests, despite the well-documented risk of proliferation of COVID-19 through asymptomatic carriers.**

FFI did not note significant decreases during a short period of time in numbers of confirmed cases at specific facilities between August 29 and September 22. However, **advocates continue to report widespread instances in which people with severe COVID-19 symptoms cannot access tests, and we remain concerned that the true rate of COVID-19 transmission in ICE custody is much higher than what is publicly reported** (see below section on *Testing* for additional analysis).

FFI continued to document numerous apparent inaccuracies in ICE’s reporting on cumulative cases of COVID-19 at specific facilities. While numbers of current cases of COVID-19 ICE records at individual facilities can reasonably be expected to decrease and increase over time, the total number of cumulative cases recorded since the outset of the pandemic logically should never decrease. **However, in several instances, ICE reported declines in the total number of cumulative cases at individual facilities:**

- On September 30, the number of total cumulative confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported by ICE decreased from 67 to 66 at Florence Service Processing Center in **Florence, Arizona**.
- On October 9, the number of total cumulative confirmed cases reported by ICE decreased from 93 to 91 at Adams County Correctional Center in **Natchez, Mississippi**.

Testing

During this period, ICE dramatically expanded its testing. However, the agency continues to only release information on the cumulative number of tests administered as opposed to numbers of tests administered per facility or information on the number of people currently in custody who have received COVID-19 tests. **This makes it impossible to discern the current rate of COVID-19 transmission in custody. FFI continues to express strong concern that the true COVID-19 transmission rate in ICE detention is much higher than reported.**

FFI documented widespread reports of continued limitations to access to testing and a seemingly ad hoc approach to how testing is prioritized based on facility. **Where mass testing is available, roll out of this testing appears to be in response to judicial orders or public pressure as opposed to a systematic effort to test everyone in ICE custody.** This dynamic also applies to where re-testing is available for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are no longer displaying symptoms but may still be asymptomatic carriers.

ICE's Reporting of Administered COVID-19 Tests

ICE dramatically expanded the number of COVID-19 tests administered to people in detention. **As of October 22, ICE reported that it had administered COVID-19 tests for 50,105 people over time** - representing an increase in 10,662 since FFI's last update on September 29 and a test positive rate of approximately 13.4%. As of September 18, ICE reports 18,827 people in its custody (a decrease of 1,270 since FFI's last update September 29).

Since ICE reports cumulative number of tests over time and does not provide information on how many people currently in its custody have received recent COVID-19 tests, or how tests are allocated by facility, **it is impossible to discern overall percentage of people currently in ICE custody who have received COVID-19 tests, or the percentage of people currently in custody who are COVID-19 positive.** FFI continues to express concern that the total percentage of people in ICE detention who have contracted COVID-19 is significantly higher than 13.4% due to ICE's choice to prioritize allocating tests to people subject to deportations; restrictions on access to testing; inconsistencies in ICE's public reporting; and prevalence modeling conducted by peer organizations.

Continued Limitations to Test Access

FFI continued to receive numerous reports of instances in which ICE and its contract staff otherwise limited access to testing for people in detention, including for people with severe COVID-19 symptoms.

- On October 6, a person detained at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in **San Diego, California** reported that he was denied a COVID-19 test upon request.ⁱⁱⁱ Although the person reported COVID-19 symptoms, including difficulty breathing and headaches, they were informed that they needed to have additional symptoms, like diarrhea, before they could receive a test.
- On October 22, advocates with Immigrant Action Alliance reported widespread denial of COVID-19 testing to people with severe symptoms at the Glades County Detention Center in **Moore Haven, Florida**.

FFI continued to document lack of testing during transfers into ICE detention or between ICE facilities. This included lack of testing during a mass transfer of detained immigrants of Cameroonian and Congolese origin from various facilities to the Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas** and then to the Alexandria Staging Facility in **Alexandria, Louisiana**:

- On October 8, a person reports that he tested positive for COVID-19 at the Winn Detention Center in **Winnfield, Louisiana** on September 23.^{iv} The person reported that he was then transferred to the Alexandria Staging Facility in **Alexandria, Louisiana** and was then transferred to the Prairieland Detention Facility in Alvarado, Texas, prior to being deported to Cameroon.
- On October 9, a person transferred into the Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas** from another ICE facility reported that he did not receive a COVID-19 test on arrival and that many people in detention were displaying COVID-19 symptoms.^v
- On October 9, a second person transferred into the Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas** reported that many people in the facility have underlying medical conditions leaving them vulnerable to COVID-19, but no testing was being conducted.^{vi}

Lack of Information Regarding Test Results

In some instances, people who received COVID-19 tests in detention reported that they were not informed of test results, leading to high levels of stress and psychological anguish:

- On October 6, an individual detained at Adelanto Ice Processing Center in California reported that he and his roommate were tested for COVID-19 but no one has come by to give them the results of the test.^{vii} On Tuesday October 13, 2020, the person reported that he was given the test again and was not given the test results again.

Availability of mass testing linked to external pressure

In instances where mass testing was made available, this appeared to be in response to either an explicit judicial order mandating that testing, threat of an adverse judicial order, or public pressure. For example, a man detained at the Immigration Centers of America facility in **Farmville, Virginia** reported that re-testing is available for anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and no longer displays symptoms, but is concerned that they may be asymptomatic carriers. However, ICE and its contract staff at Farmville is motivated to provide mass testing and retesting to shore up public confidence that the Farmville facility – which was the site of the nation’s largest concentration of COVID-19 in detention^{viii} – is now COVID free. In August, federal judge Leonia Brinkema issued a preliminary injunction barring transfers into Farmville due to the large number of confirmed cases at the facility and evidence that transfers and delayed testing had caused this outbreak. On October 13, Justice Department lawyers appealed this ruling,^{ix} and ICE currently reports zero confirmed cases at Farmville. The ability to transfer people into Farmville from other ICE facilities and from local, county and state jails and prisons is critical for ICE’s overall ability to conduct enforcement activity and possibly deport people who are not granted a decision in their favor by an immigration judge. In a motion to lift the injunction barring transfers into Farmville, ICE officials stated that “ICE has been limited in detaining aliens in the region...” and that comparable “bed space” did not exist elsewhere in the mid-Atlantic.^x

In some instances, people detained at ICE facilities subject to judicial orders mandating mass testing reported continued inability to access testing:

- On October 12, a person detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** reported that, although a judicial order^{xi} mandated that everyone detained at the facility receive at least one COVID-19 test per week, it had been a week and a half since their last test and that staff had not taken their temperature in days.^{xii} The person reported that a nurse at the facility attributed lack of regular temperature testing to lack of available personnel.

Cohorting and Isolation

ICE continues to implement “cohorting” throughout its detention network – in which groups of people who are suspected or confirmed of having been exposed to COVID-19 are grouped together for a period of isolation and observation. ICE uses “cohorting” against the guidance of medical experts who say that the practice should only be used as a “last resort,” and amid widespread concerns that ICE’s implementation of cohorting has accelerated proliferation of COVID-19. **FFI continued to document instances in which people who had tested negative for COVID-19 remained cohorted with people who had tested positive for the virus.** In instances where ICE implements individual quarantines, people in detention continue to report that this effectively functions as solitary confinement as they are often denied medical care and access to other essential services and express fear of reporting COVID-19 for this reason.

Grouping People with COVID-19 Symptoms or Who Have Tested Positive for COVID-19 with General Population

FFI continued to document numerous instances in which people exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19 are grouped with the general population:

- In a September 28 press interview, an attorney advocate with the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project reported that, prior to publicly announcing a large outbreak of COVID-19 at the La Palma Correctional Center in **Eloy, Arizona**, ICE moved people who had tested positive for COVID-19 out of the general population, only to return them days later.^{xiii}
- On October 12, a person detained at the Stewart Detention Center in **Lumpkin, Georgia** reported that they were detained in a “pod” with 60 people and that many people in the “pod” were demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19, while others were not.^{xiv}
- On October 13, a person detained at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in **San Diego, California** reported that people who had tested positive for COVID-19 were able to have contact with people who had not tested positive for the virus, including in common areas.^{xv}
- On October 8, a person detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** reported that everyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 is being detained in the same unit.^{xvi} The person reported that they had previously been quarantined due to potential exposure to COVID-19 and that another person was added to their cell, over the objections of medical staff.
- On October 20, a person detained at the LaSalle Detention Facility in **Jena, Louisiana** reported that facility officials did not immediately remove people who had tested positive for COVID-19 from the general population – at times waiting several hours before moving people who had tested positive into quarantine.^{xvii} The same person reported that some people who had tested positive for COVID-19 were re-detained with the general population after a period in quarantine, although they may still be carrying the virus.

Solitary Confinement as Means of Quarantine

People in detention continue to report widespread instances in which individual “quarantines” effectively amount to solitary confinement. People in detention continued to report fear of seeking medical assistance for COVID-19 symptoms due to concerns that they would be placed in solitary confinement, where they are even more vulnerable to medical neglect, abuse, and face added barriers to external communication. People in detention reported similar fears of seeking medical help from external hospitals and care providers for concern that they would be placed in solitary confinement for a period of two weeks or more upon their return. Mental health and humanitarian protection experts continue to decry solitary confinement as a means of medical isolation in all forms of detention.^{xviii}

- In the previously referenced September 28 interview, an attorney advocate with the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project reported unsanitary conditions throughout the La Palma Correctional Center in **Eloy, Arizona**, and that conditions were particularly unhygienic in “medical isolation” units, which people recovering from or battling COVID-19 are forced to stay in for 23 hours or more a day.^{xi} The same person reported that people in medical isolation at the La Palma facility are only allowed out of their medical isolation cells for 20 minutes a day, and are often forced to choose between using that time to shower or call loved ones.
- An October 6 press report featured accounts from several people who had been detained at the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center in **Bakersfield, California**; the Aurora Contract Detention Facility in **Aurora, Colorado**; and the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** detailing prolonged detention in solitary confinement, including detention in filthy conditions, detention in cells with no beds and only a mat on the floor for sleeping; and lack of access to commissary and other services.^{xii}

Transfers and Book-Ins

ICE continued to carry out transfers between its facilities and to conduct transfers from local, state, and federal jails and prisons to immigration detention, despite clear documentation – and the Department of Homeland Security’s own admission - that all forms of transfers have accelerated the proliferation of COVID19 within detention and in communities in both the United States and abroad. **Enforcement activity significantly increased during this period, resulting in more book-ins to ICE detention, as well as several instances in which people released from ICE custody earlier in the pandemic were re-detained during routine ICE check-ins. FFI also noted an increase in transfers to facilitate mass deportations by concentrating immigrants of common national origin in one facility prior to deportation flight.**

Increase in ICE Enforcement Activity

During this period, ICE substantially increased its enforcement activity, including steps to implement expanded powers of expedited removal, in which ICE officers can arrest and deport undocumented immigrants anywhere in the United States who are unable to prove that they have been in the country for two or more years, without a hearing before a judge.^{xiii} In an October 2 email to ICE employees reviewed by Bloomberg Government, Tony Pham, the senior official performing the duties of the ICE director, stated that ICE attorneys have until October 16 to complete training regarding expanded powers of expedited removal.^{xiv} Advocates, including Freedom for Immigrants, express serious concern that implementation of expanded powers of expedited removal will result in further erosion of due process for immigrants and a significant increase in both immigration detention levels and deportations.

During this period, ICE also expanded its enforcement activity in “sanctuary jurisdictions.” On October 16, ICE announced that arrests of 170 individuals between



October 3 and October 9 in **Seattle, Denver, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC.**^{xxiii} On October 7, ICE announced the arrest of over 125 individuals in **California.**^{xxiv} Advocates, including Freedom for Immigrants, decried this increase in enforcement activity as political theater and an attempt of the Trump administration to rally their political base.^{xxv}

In the course of its enforcement activity during this period, ICE arrested and re-detained people that had previously been granted release from detention due to their medical vulnerability due to COVID-19:

- According to an October 15 press report, Amir Ali, a 47 year old man of Pakistani origin, was arrested at a routine ICE check-in and transferred to the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** and subsequently the Florence Service Processing Center in **Florence, Arizona**, where he began to experience severe COVID-19 symptoms and is now facing deportation.^{xxvi} Ali has been in the United States for more than 15 years, and survived three prior periods of immigration detention. He is married to a U.S. citizen and has two young children.
- In April, ICE released Julio Colcas, a 55-year-old long time U.S. resident of Peruvian origin, from detention in the Essex County Correctional Facility in **Newark, New Jersey.**^{xxvii} Colcas was one of the approximately 245 people^{xxviii} ICE released from detention from three county jails in New York and New Jersey due to concerns regarding their medical vulnerability to COVID-19. At the time of his release, he had been in ICE detention for three years. Colcas was released on orders of supervision, which required him to wear an ankle monitor and comply with regular check-ins with ICE officers. In an October 19 press statement, Colcas reported that two days after a regular check-in in early October, an ICE official called him to say that his ankle monitor's battery needed to be replaced. Colcas reported that, when he returned to the ICE field office at Newark to replace the battery, he was re-detained and transferred back to Essex, where he remains detained.

Transfers From Local, State, and Federal Jails and Prisons to ICE Detention

Advocates, including Freedom for Immigrants, continue to raise concerns regarding transfers of people completing criminal sentences at local, state, and federal jails and prisons to immigration detention. As many people are transferred into ICE detention upon completion of lengthy criminal sentences, many of those being booked into ICE detention are elderly, and many have underlying health conditions leaving them vulnerable to COVID-19. **Nine of the 11 deaths in ICE custody since April 2020 were of people aged 50 and above.**

Transfers Linked to Outbreaks of COVID-19

According to a draft internal Department of Homeland Security report reviewed by *Buzzfeed News*, DHS officials internally acknowledged that transfers of detained

immigrants between facilities had “contributed to outbreaks of COVID-19” and that poor information sharing had further impeded efforts to contain the virus.^{xxix}

FFI documented an additional instance in which transfers are correlated with an increase in COVID-19 cases:

- In our last report, we noted that on September 17, ICE transferred a person from the Houston Contract Detention Facility in **Houston, Texas** to the Montgomery Processing Center in **Conroe, Texas**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported 15 current cases of COVID-19 cases at the Houston facility and none at Montgomery. **Since September 28, there have been 10 new active cases reported at Montgomery.**

Transfers to facilitate deportations and as a form of retaliation

FFI documented a spike in large-scale transfers to facilitate deportations. FFI documented the transfers of 28 people of Cameroonian origin from 14 facilities to the Prairieland Detention Center in **Alvarado, Texas** between October 5 and October 9. (Note: There were more people transferred to Prairieland than FFI was able to document. The 28 individual transfers were documented were obtained by tracking the movement of individual A-numbers through the ICE Detainee Locator). Many of those transferred to Prairieland Detention Center arrived via transfer first to the Alexandria Staging Facility in **Alexandria, Louisiana**. After arriving at Prairieland, many of those subjected to transfers were deported to Cameroon on October 13 (see below section on *Deportations* for more information). FFI received reports regarding abuse during the transfers to Prairieland and Alexandria, including use of force and denial of food.

Many of those transferred to Prairieland were transferred from facilities with no confirmed cases of COVID-19, despite the fact that Prairieland had nine active confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the time of the transfers:

- On October 5, two individuals were transferred from Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center in **Pine Prairie, Louisiana** from LaSalle Detention Facility in **Olla, Louisiana**.
- On October 7, two individuals were transferred from Imperial Regional Detention Facility in **Calexico, California**, and one individual was transferred from Otay Mesa Detention Facility in **San Diego, California**.

In several instances, people in detention also reported internal transfers threatened as a form of retaliation:

- On September 28 in the midst of an outbreak, a person detained at the Adelanto Service Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** reported that facility officials were threatening to transfer people from the east to the west wing (“where the sick people are”) if they protested detention conditions.

Transfers To/From Facilities with High Numbers of Confirmed Active Cases of COVID-19 To/From Facilities with No Confirmed Active Cases of COVID-19

FFI documented six instances during this period in which ICE transferred people from facilities with active cases of COVID-19 to facilities with no active cases, including:

- On October 6, ICE transferred an individual from the Wakulla County Jail in **Crawfordville, Florida** to the Baker County Jail in **Macclenny, Florida**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported four confirmed active cases of COVID-19 at Wakulla and no confirmed active cases at Baker.
- On October 7, ICE transferred an individual from the Henderson Detention Facility in **Henderson, Nevada** to the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center in **Basile, Louisiana**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported 11 confirmed active cases of COVID-19 at Henderson and no confirmed active cases at South Louisiana.
- On October 19, ICE transferred four individuals from the Jena/LaSalle Facility in **Jena, Louisiana** to the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center in **Evangeline Parish, Louisiana**. At the time of the transfers, ICE reported 13 confirmed active cases of COVID-19 at Jena/LaSalle and no confirmed active cases at South Louisiana.

FFI also documented 19 instances during this period in which ICE transferred people from facilities with zero active cases to facilities with confirmed cases of COVID-19, including:

- On September 29, ICE transferred one person from the Nye County Jail in **Pahrump, Nevada** to the Nevada Southern Detention Center in **Pahrump, Nevada**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported 0 active cases of COVID-19 at Nye County Jail and three confirmed active cases at Nevada Southern.
- On October 8, ICE transferred eight individuals from the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center in **Basile, Louisiana** to the Jackson Parish Correctional Center in **Jonesboro, Louisiana**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported 0 active cases of COVID-19 at South Louisiana and 54 confirmed active cases at Jackson Parish.
- On October 8, ICE transferred an individual from the Lasalle Detention Center in **Olla, Louisiana** to the LaSalle Detention Facility in **Jena, Louisiana**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported 0 active cases of COVID-19 at Lasalle and 8 confirmed active cases at Jena LaSalle.
- On October 19, ICE transferred an individual from the Torrance County Detention Facility in **Torrance, New Mexico** to the El Paso Service Processing Center in **El Paso, Texas**. At the time of the transfer, ICE reported 0 active cases of COVID-19 at Torrance and six confirmed active cases at El Paso.

Circular Transfers

During this period, FFI documented 15 instances of “circular transfers” – in which an individual is transferred between multiple facilities only to end up back where they started:

- On October 2, an individual was transferred from Stewart Detention Facility in **Lumpkin, Georgia** to the Broward Transitional Center in **Pompano Beach, Florida**. On October 7, the same person was then transferred to Irwin Detention Facility in **Ocilla, Georgia**. The following day, on October 8, the same individual was transferred from Irwin back to the Stewart facility.
- On October 8, nine individuals were transferred from the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center (which had zero confirmed active cases at the time according to ICE) in **Evangeline Parish, Louisiana** to the Jackson Parish Correctional Center in **Jonesboro, Louisiana** (which had 54 confirmed active cases). On October 12, those same nine individuals were transferred back to the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center.
- During our last report, we highlighted that on August 26, an individual was transferred from Allen Parish Jail in **Oberlin, Louisiana** to the Richwood Correctional Center in **Monroe, Louisiana**, and that on September 17, the same person was transferred back to the Allen Parish Jail, despite the fact that Richwood had at that time 37 active confirmed cases and Allen Parish zero.
 - That same individual, along with another person, was again transferred from Allen Parish to Richwood on October 8, and then both were transferred back to Allen Parish on October 14. During this period Richwood has reported 42 active confirmed cases and Allen Parish still supposedly has zero.

Missing in Detention

FFI continued to document instances in which people went “missing” from ICE’s Online Detainee Locator System (ICE Locator) for prolonged periods. Advocates, including FFI, continues to raise concerns that people are removed from the Locator System upon testing positive for COVID-19, upon transfer from detention centers to local hospitals due to acute illness from COVID-19, and upon transfer to alternative facilities in response to internal organizing. Family members also express great difficulty in locating their loved ones during times in which they are missing from the ICE Locator, raising concerns they are left to wonder if they may be acutely ill or dead.

FFI documented 15 instances during this period in which the location of people in immigration detention was listed as “Call Field Office” with no easily retrievable information about exact location for a period ranging from five to 94 days. This includes:

- On August 4, an individual appeared in the Locator as at Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas**, after 94 days of being listed as “Call Field Office,” since July 7.

- On August 15, an individual's location in the ICE Locator changed from being detained at the Joe Corley Detention Facility in **Conroe, Texas** to "Call Field Office." On October 7 (54 days later) their status was listed as at the Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas**.
- On September 28, an individual appeared in the Locator as at Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas**, after 94 days of being listed as "Call Field Office," since July 7.
- On October 8, an individual appeared in the Locator as at McHenry County Correctional Facility in **Woodstock, Illinois**, after 84 days of being listed as "Call Field Office," since July 7.

In five other instances during this period, attempts to locate individuals in the ICE Locator returned no information at all for at least five days and up to 163. Instead, the ICE Locator listed people's status as "zero matching records." Examples include:

- On April 23, an individual in detention at the Buffalo Federal Detention Center in **Batavia, New York** completely disappeared from the ICE Locator ("zero matching records found"), and did not reappear in the Locator until October 2, 163 days later, as at the Clinton County Jail in **Plattsburgh, New York**.
- On June 8, an individual in detention at the Elizabeth Detention Facility in **Elizabeth, New York** completely disappeared from the ICE Locator ("zero matching records found"), and did not reappear in the Locator until September 28, 113 days later, as at the Clinton County Jail in **Plattsburgh, New York**.
- On September 17, an individual in detention at the River Correctional Center in **Ferriday, Louisiana**, completely disappeared from the ICE Locator ("zero matching records found"), and did not reappear in the Locator until October 6, 20 days later, as at the El Paso Service Processing Center in **El Paso, Texas**.

Deportations

Deportations dramatically increased during this period, particularly mass deportation of Black immigrants to Haiti and several countries in West and Central Africa. **Advocates, including Freedom for Immigrants, express fear that mass deportations will continue to accelerate, and the Trump administration will seek to deport as many people as they can in the months ahead.** FFI documented credible allegations from a group of Cameroonian asylum seekers that they had been forced into signing their deportation papers, including severe beatings and torture. Of the eight asylum seekers who filed a formal complaint with DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties calling for an investigation into these allegations of abuse, at least five were deported. FFI continues to express concern regarding the safety of people subjected to deportation, including risk of re-detention and additional abuse at the hands of foreign government security forces. FFI continued to document reports in which people tested positive for COVID-19 shortly before deportation or upon arrival in their country of origin.

Acceleration in Deportations

On October 19, advocacy group Witness at the Border, which regularly tracks deportation flights, reported a record number of deportation flights for the week of October 19 – 34 deportation flights to 10 different countries.^{xxx} Witness Border reported that this number of deportation flights exceeded pre-pandemic levels and included flights to Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Columbia, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.^{xxxi} Witness at the Border attributed this increase in deportation activity in part to increases in border expulsions^{xxxii}, and noted that people subject to expulsions and deportations may share the same flight.

Advocates, including Freedom for Immigrants, noted an increase in mass deportations of Black immigrants, including large-scale deportations to Haiti, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In their October 19 report, Witness at the Border reported that more than 1,000 Haitians were forced to return to Haiti via deportation or expulsion in the month of October alone, including children and families.^{xxxiii} On October 13, ICE deported 126 asylum seekers and immigrants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon, with many of those on board the flight expressing fear of re-detention, abuse, torture and even death upon arrival.^{xxxiv} At the time of writing, the fate of those subjected to deportation to Cameroon remains unclear, although Cameroon state media reports that, after completing a two week quarantine, at least a portion of those on the deportation flight will be transferred to the capital city of Yaoundé for additional questioning. Several of those on board the October 13 report had organized hunger strikes while in detention in protest of indefinite detention, racism in the asylum process, and terrible conditions in detention^{xxxv} – raising concerns that deportation is being used as a means of retaliation for internal organizing.

Forced Signing of Deportation Orders

On October 7, FFI, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention, Natchez Network, Detention Watch Network, Cameroon American Council, Haitian Bridge Alliance, and Families for Freedom filed a multi-individual complaint with the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) on behalf of eight asylum seekers of Cameroonian origin detained at the Adams County Correctional Center in **Natchez, Mississippi**.^{xxxvi} The report detailed allegations from the eight men that ICE and its contract staff used torture, including beatings, use of pepper spray, and kneeling on the neck and back of restrained immigrants. One person detained at Adams alleged that facility officials broke one of his fingers while forcing him to sign deportation papers. The men also expressed concern that ICE was attempting to deport them using potentially illegitimate travel documents. The complaint called on CRCL and the DHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to open an immediate investigation into the allegations brought forward by the detained asylum seekers and to halt deportations until such an investigation could be completed. Following Congressional pressure and sustained public advocacy, two Cameroonian asylum seekers were pulled from their scheduled deportation flights, while at least five were deported.^{xxxvii}

Freedom for Immigrants continues to receive reports from people detained in ICE facilities throughout the South regarding use of force to coerce people into signing deportation papers. Other reports of forced/coerced deportations include:

- On October 6, *The Intercept* reported that ICE had wrongly deported Cesar Marroquin, an asylum seeker of Guatemalan origin. In a press statement, Marroquin said that he was forced to board a deportation flight before he had the opportunity to appear before an immigration judge regarding his asylum claim.^{xxxviii} ICE confirmed to *The Intercept* that they had erred in deporting Marroquin. At the time of writing, Marroquin remains stranded on the Guatemalan-Mexican border, fearful for his safety, and with no clear path to returning to the United States.
- On Oct. 14th, a private attorney reported to Freedom for Immigrants that multiple clients have reported being coerced into signing their own deportation documents through ICE agents' use of force at the Winn Correctional Facility in **Winnfield, Louisiana**. These reports are similar to earlier allegations - on August 7, the Southern Poverty Law Center filed a complaint to the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General on behalf of two asylum seekers who independently reported on two separate occasions dated July 13 and July 14, 2020 that ICE officials in the Winn Correctional Facility forcibly removed them from their dormitories and handcuffed them in the visitation area after they refused to sign their own deportation orders. The men report that ICE officials physically forced them to provide a thumbprint on their deportation orders. One of the individuals reported that an ICE official violently threw him to the ground, causing his face to profusely bleed. Both men were shocked by these actions, as they report that they are pursuing immigration appeals of their removal orders, and neither of them have legal representation.

Deportation While Ill with COVID-19

People in detention continued to report instances in which people presenting COVID-19 symptoms were subject to deportation. Upon arriving at Prairieland Detention Facility in **Alvarado, Texas**, an individual reported that there are no COVID-19 tests being administered but that people were showing symptoms four days prior to the mass deportation flight to Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.^{xxxix} While it is unknown if those on board the October 13 deportation flight of 88 people of Cameroonian and Congolese origin received COVID-19 tests prior to deportation, family members and close associates of people on board the flight reported that several people tested positive upon arrival in Cameroon.

Releases

As of October 19, ICE reports 543 releases from immigration detention as a result of court order. This is an increase of only eight reported judicial releases since FFI's last update on September 29. However, ICE's reported detained population decreased by

1,270 between September 18 (when ICE reported the detained population to be 20,097) and October 16 (when ICE reported the detained population to be 18,827). Given recent increases in enforcement activity, the continued decline in overall population **raises questions regarding by what mechanisms people are being released from custody and underscores the need for greater transparency in reporting on numbers of people released via parole, bond, subject to supervision or by deportation.** At the same time, recent analysis indicates that **people in immigration detention are being held in detention for longer than any period in at least a decade^{xi}**, raising questions and concerns regarding barriers to existing avenues for release, including release on parole, into the care of communities, and via community-based alternatives to detention programming.

Notable Judicial Orders for Release

On September 29, Federal Judge Terry J. Hatter ordered ICE to draft a population reduction plan for the immediate reduction of the detained population at the Adelanto ICE Processing center in **Adelanto, California** due to ICE's failure to contain a rapidly spreading outbreak of COVID-19 at the facility.^{xii} On October 15, Judge Hatter further ordered that, beginning on October 19, ICE must release at least 50 immigrants per day until a target detention level of 475 is achieved (from 772).^{xiii} In his ruling, Hatter accused ICE of a "lack of candor" and, at times, deliberate dishonesty in its communications to the Court. In his October 15th order, Hatter cites ICE's failure to comply with the September 29th mandate to submit daily reporting on Adelanto's census information in a timely manner. In addition, Hatter issued a mandate for a court appointed "special master" to monitor ICE's compliance with court orders and to investigate the veracity of information submitted by the government. Hatter also cited systemic failure of ICE and its contract staff to comply with public health guidelines, including detaining four-eight people in 8-by-10-foot cells and taking no steps to enable social distancing in common areas.

Although ICE has begun releasing people from Adelanto into the care of their community, according to Hatter's order, ICE may achieve reductions in detention levels by releasing people on parole, orders of supervision, or via deporting them, raising concerns that some of those detained in Adelanto are vulnerable to deportation.

On October 7, U.S. District Judge Jesus Bernal granted civil rights organizations motion to enforce a preliminary injunction ordering ICE to perform custody determinations to everyone held in ICE detention in order to identify and prioritize for release individuals with underlying medical conditions rendering them vulnerable to COVID-19.^{xliii}

Freedom for Immigrants continues to receive widespread reports from people in ICE detention reporting medical neglect for serious medical conditions, including medical conditions rendering people vulnerable to COVID-19.

Barriers to Release on Bond

Prior to Judge Hatter’s October 15 order that, beginning on October 19, ICE must release at least 50 immigrants per day until a target detention level of 475 is achieved, FFI documented numerous barriers to release from Adelanto on bond. On October 2, FFI filed a complaint to DHS CRCL documenting numerous and repeated refusals to release detained individuals who had been granted bond from the Adelanto facility.^{xliv} On September 24, a FFI employee attempted to post bond at the ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) office in **Portland, Oregon**, for two individuals detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California**. Despite presenting completed bond worksheets for both individuals, proof of identification as obligor, and cashier’s checks made out to DHS, the Portland ICE bond officer informed the FFI employee that “Adelanto ICE” had rejected the requests. Adelanto Detention Facility staff reached by phone that same day stated, “We are not going to be releasing people in the near future... We are hoping that is going to change soon but we have not been given an end date.” An attorney for the two men detained at Adelanto then spoke by phone with the relevant Deportation Officer for her clients, who stated that the stoppage of releases of individuals on bond from Adelanto was due to a “no movement” order in place which came from “above, from the courts, and is being litigated now.” On September 29 and October 1, a FFI employee twice returned to the Portland ICE ERO office, and was again told that she could not post bond for the two people held at Adelanto. On October 2, an ICE official informed the attorney for the two men detained at Adelanto that the stoppage of releases was supposedly due to a “no movement” order issued on September 23 from Judge Terry Hatter stating that “the Government shall, forthwith, stop all new intakes and transfers of detainees into the Adelanto Immigration and Customs Enforcement Processing Center.”

Freedom for Immigrants expresses concern with what appears to be a willful attempt to misinterpret and obstruct Judge Hatter’s orders and underscores the need for increased transparency in ICE’s reporting on by what means it is currently releasing people from Adelanto. FFI also emphasizes that release from detention during the COVID-19 should not be conditioned on an individual’s ability to pay bond.

Deaths

During this period, ICE did not announce the deaths of anyone in its custody. However, **Freedom for Immigrants continues to express concern that the true fatality toll due to COVID-19 in ICE detention is higher than publicly reported, due to lack of information regarding the fate of people released from ICE detention after being exposed to or having contracted COVID-19, including release of people who are very ill.**

Freedom for Immigrants also continues to call for greater transparency in reporting on the rate of COVID-19 transmission and fatalities due to COVID-19 among immigrants held in the custody of other federal agencies, including the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). The USMS does not regularly report any information about the rate of COVID-19 transmission within its facilities and among its staff, or fatalities due to COVID-19. According to data received via Freedom of Immigration Act request, as of October 1, at

least 17 people held in pre-trial detention in USMS custody have died of complications due to COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic.^{xlv} According to the same data, 5,450 people in USMS have tested positive for COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic. Six of these deaths related to COVID-19 in USMS custody occurred at facilities in **Texas**, and include Alonzo Garza-Salazar, a 56-year-old man of Mexican origin who died of complications from COVID-19 at the Joe Corley Detention Facility in Conroe, Texas on May 14.^{xlvi} People held in pre-trial detention in USMS detention include people facing criminal charges for immigration-related offenses, including felony re-entry, as well as people facing criminal charges for non-immigration related offenses.^{xlvii}

Oversight

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, ICE suspended most forms of visitation for non-legal service providers, including social visitation and visitation from community groups officially registered with ICE as stakeholders. During this period, FFI received reports from members and affiliates within FFI's visitation network that ICE and its contractors have taken steps to begin "virtual" visitation at several facilities in the Northeast and on-site social visitation in several facilities in the northeast and California. FFI received reports that on-site social visitation had resumed primarily at county jails. In the Northeast, at Hudson County Jail in **Kearny, New Jersey** and the Bergen County Jail in **Hackensack, New Jersey**, visitors have the option of going to a non-contact visit at either jail or conducting a visit via video teleconference where the visitor must pay \$6.30 for 30 minutes of time. **FFI continues to express concern that the majority of oversight conducted by official oversight bodies is restricted to virtual conversations and surveys and emphasizes the vital role community groups have historically played in facilitating oversight and transparency into conditions in detention.** retaliation

In some instances, state legislatures are considering or have passed legislation that would expand the capacity of local authorities to conduct oversight in ICE detention centers in their jurisdictions. For example, on October 2, the Virginia state legislature passed a bill that would classify privately operated immigrant jails as "local correctional facilities," and would subject them to the same health inspections as other jails in the state.^{xlviii} Lawmakers introduced the bill in response to significant COVID-19 outbreaks at the Immigration Centers of America facility in **Farmville, Virginia** and the Caroline Detention Facility in **Bowling Green, Virginia** and national reports of abuse in ICE detention centers.

Conditions Inside ICE Detention

Conditions inside ICE detention remained dire. FFI continued to document failure of facility staff to observe public health protocols, barriers to communication, inadequate access to food and essential supplies, as well as use of force and retaliation for internal organizing. During this period, FFI noted an increase in reports of unsanitary conditions. In some instances, people in detention reported that degradation of conditions appears to be linked to staffing shortages at privately operated facilities.

Medical Neglect and Abuses

FFI continued to document widespread medical neglect and abuses at the hands of medical practitioners contracted by ICE. During this period, acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf submitted a document to a Senate panel stating that, since 2017, five women detained at the Irwin County Detention Center in **Irwin, Georgia** had been referred to external medical care providers for hysterectomies.^{xlix} When allegations regarding forced hysterectomies at the hands of a doctor contracted to provide services to women detained at Irwin first surfaced, DHS repeatedly stated that only two women detained at Irwin had received hysterectomies since 2017. Wolf did not offer an explanation for this discrepancy. During this period, ICE also confirmed that it had switched health care providers at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in San Diego, California to private prison company CoreCivic/CCA.¹ In our September report, FFI included accounts from people detained at Otay Mesa that the quality of medical care had deteriorated following this change.

Additional examples of medical abuse and neglect in ICE detention include:

- On September 29, FFI filed a medical advocacy letter on behalf of a person detained at the Worcester County Jail in **Snow Hill, Maryland**.^{li} The letter reported that the person detained has not received adequate treatment for serious underlying health conditions while in detention, including treatment for lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, respiratory illness, and partial paralysis and lack of muscle control due to a prior stroke in 2017 he experienced at a prior facility. The individual reported that he has been denied physical therapy and that facility officials told him that he had been “handicapped for too long and his condition wouldn’t change with physical therapy.” The person reported suffering deteriorating mental and physical health as a result of this denial of care.
- On October 12, a second person detained at the Worcester County Jail in **Snow Hill, Maryland** reported that they made a request for a medical appointment for a flu shot and for therapy for her back.^{lii} The person reported that she had surgery to address a spinal injury on September 19. However, due to lack of access to needed physical therapy in detention, she now lacks sensation in her feet. In addition to lacking access to therapy, the person also reported that ICE failed to bring her to a scheduled post-surgery check up.
- On October 9, a person detained at the Henderson Detention Center in **Henderson, Nevada** reported that he has been denied adequate treatment for a spinal injury that resulted in severe nerve pain through his legs.^{liii} The person reported that ICE has not filled his prescribed medication and that he is forced to rely on over the counter medication. The same person reported that they engaged in a hunger strike to demand medical attention over the summer for COVID-19 symptoms. The person reported that, after testing positive for COVID-19 in August, he continues to experience mild symptoms, including lethargy and body aches.

- On October 12, a person detained at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in **San Diego California** reported that mental health providers at the facility were denying her requests for help.^{liv} The person reported that she feared her identity as a transgender woman was causing low quality care.
- On October 19, a press report described the medical neglect and lack of medical interpretation and translation for an individual from China in ICE detention at the McHenry County Correctional Center in **Woodstock, Illinois**.^{lv} The man was not able to ask for a doctor because of language barriers despite having extremely high blood pressure upon arrival. The jail eventually began to try to communicate with him using Google Translate, which did not work. He was given 10 to 15 pills a day with no explanation in Chinese, and did not know that he had the right to refuse to take the pills, despite them causing dizziness, shortness of breath, and headaches. He was also put in COVID-19 quarantine despite never testing positive.

Failure to Observe Proper Public Health Protocols

FFI documented widespread instances in which ICE and its contract staff failed to observe proper health protocols to mitigate against the proliferation of COVID-19, including failure to facilitate social distancing, lack of regular screening for COVID-19 symptoms, and continued inadequate access to hand sanitizer and soap:

- In a September 17 written statement, a man detained at the Imperial Regional Detention Facility in **Calexico, California** reported that people in detention are forced into close proximity in enclosed areas without personal protective equipment several times a day while facility staff conducts searches of sleeping areas.^{lvi}
- In a September 28 press statement, an attorney representing people detained at the La Palma Correctional Center in **Eloy, Arizona** reported that they observed masks distributed to detained people in May torn from constant washing and that facility staff was not providing new masks.^{lvii} The attorney also reported that staff regularly lowered their own facemasks when speaking with detained people.
- On October 8, a person detained at the Strafford County Corrections in **Dover, New Hampshire** reported that everyone is held in an open dorm, with bunks less than two feet apart, making social distancing impossible.^{lviii}
- On October 9, a person detained at the Winn Correctional Center in **Winnfield, Louisiana** reported that the facility failed to ensure social distancing, as bunks remained positioned three feet apart.^{lix} The same person reported lack of regular screening for temperatures, lack of access to hand sanitizer, and general lack of cleanliness in the facility.
- In a court deposition, the ICE official charged with overseeing operations at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California**, stated that he had imagined a three-foot “sphere” around the bodies of people detained at the facility when determining which detention levels could enable safe social distancing.^{lx} On October 13, a person detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** reported that they tested negative for COVID-19 but

- remained detained alongside people who had recently tested positive for the virus.^{lxi} The person reported that they were forced to use the same showers.
- In October, an advocate with Immigrant Action Alliance (former Friends of Miami Dade Detainees) cited reports from people detained at the Glades County Detention Center in **Moore Haven, Florida** that facility officials were withholding toilet paper. People in detention reported needing to ask guards for toilet paper multiple times and that they are often told to wait, not given any, and, in at least one case, suffered verbal abuse and racial slurs.

Unsanitary Conditions

FFI received an increase in reports from people in detention of unsanitary conditions in numerous facilities. In some cases, deterioration in basic levels of cleanliness appeared to be linked to staffing shortages:

- FFI received numerous reports from people detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** on October 12 and 13 of unsanitary conditions, including no cleaning of surfaces or bathrooms. People also reported that the air conditioner temperature has been lowered so it is always very cold. People detained at Adelanto reported that cleanliness levels at the facility began to deteriorate after a court order mandated that ICE and its contract staff stop the use of HDQ Neutral, a toxic chemical disinfectant that, when sprayed indoors without providing adequate protective equipment, has caused severe side effects among people detained at Adelanto, including bloody noses, fainting, headaches, and severe coughing.
- On October 12, a person detained at the Imperial Regional Detention Facility in **Calexico, California** reported that showers are not being cleaned and that facility staff had stopped organizing regular schedules of volunteer cleaners, and instead stated that it is everyone's responsibility to clean, in violation of ICE's own detention standards.^{lxii}
- On October 14, a person detained at the Bergen County Jail in **Hackensack, New Jersey** reported that he is detained in a crowded, dirty cell and only allowed out for three hours or less per day.^{lxiii} The person reported that paint is peeling from the walls and expressed concern with the quality of available tap water. The person reported that tap water at the facility tastes so bad that they can only stand to drink it by mixing it with coffee.

Inadequate Access to Food

Freedom for Immigrants continued to document inadequate access to food, including spoiled food and religiously inappropriate food without alternatives:

- On September 30, a person detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in **Adelanto, California** reported that commissary services will be disrupted, and that staff is serving inedible rotten food. The same person also reported that they were denied access to clean water for two days and had to drink from the sink.

- On October 12, a person detained at the Pine Prairie Correctional Center in **Pine Prairie, Louisiana** reported that the lead chef in the facility died from complications due to COVID-19 and that the facility was providing expired food, which had caused many people to become ill.^{lxiv} The same person reported that there was one day at the facility where no one was given any food.
- On October 19, a person detained at the Krome North Service Processing Center in **Miami, Florida** reported that he is being served pork, in violation of his Muslim faith.^{lxv} He also reported that facility staff does not provide him with a clean prayer rug.

Internal Organizing and Retaliation

FFI continued to document internal organizing throughout ICE detention, including hunger strikes in protest of prolonged detention and unsanitary and dangerous conditions. In many cases, ICE retaliated to peaceful internal organizing, including with use of force:

- Unsealed documents released in connection with a lawsuit filed by people currently and formerly detained in facilities operated by private prison company the Geo Group indicate that staff at the Aurora Detention Center in **Aurora, Colorado** coerced people in detention into cleaning without pay, and punished those who refused, including by sending people into solitary confinement.^{lxvi}
- According to a September 28 interview with an attorney representing people at the La Palma Correctional Facility in **Eloy, Arizona**, employees of private prison company CoreCivic/CCA threatened people in detention with solitary confinement when they protested unsafe conditions of detention, including the fact that CoreCivic employees with apparent COVID-19 symptoms continued reporting to work.^{lxvii}

Conclusion

While the national death toll from COVID-19 continues to rise, ICE is adopting a “business as usual” approach by continuing to ramp up interior enforcement activity and rebuffing calls from medical experts and policy makers at all levels of government to release people from its custody into the care of their communities. Freedom for Immigrants expresses concern that ICE will use its expanded enforcement powers to facilitate additional mass deportations in the months ahead, and that deportations of asylum seekers and vulnerable immigrants to danger risks creating massive humanitarian crises in already volatile regions. Freedom for Immigrants calls on Congress to mandate that ICE release all those from its custody; to ensure immediate, free and adequate access to soap, sanitary supplies, and means of external communication for those in detention; and to immediately suspend transfers and deportations.

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https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/5f3596bdbb92c17b02c37ca4/1597347517802/FFI+August+13+COVID-19+update_FINAL.pdf

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