

DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

STATE: Georgia

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3

FACILITIES: Stewart Detention Center

CAPACITY: 1,484 (approx.)

Stewart Detention Center

Stewart Detention Center is owned by Stewart County and operated by private prison company CoreCivic. The facility operates under an [Intergovernmental Service Agreement](#) between Stewart County and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that was initiated in June of 2006. As of 2006, their [per diem rate](#) was set at \$54.25 per detained person, with a [potential increase](#) to \$60.50. The facility men and transgender women, with a total capacity of [1,966](#). According to a 2017 inspection by ICE Office of Detention Oversight (ODO), the facility's average population is [1,848](#).

A December 2017 [inspection](#) by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General (OIG) documented several standards violations at Stewart. The OIG found "an inconsistent and insufficiently documented grievance resolution process," in which facility staff failed to adequately document or explain the grievance resolution process for even very serious allegations. The OIG also documented non-working telephone services, including access to the OIG hotline. Inspectors noted inappropriate use of solitary confinement, including as punishment for minor infractions. The OIG recorded allegations from detained individuals regarding delayed access to medical care. Inspectors noted unsanitary facility conditions, including mold and peeling paint in bathrooms and lack of personal hygiene supplies. A separate 2017 [inspection](#) by ICE ODO noted 26 deficiencies in ICE detention standards, including sexual assault and abuse prevention, and use of solitary confinement.

Four people detained at Stewart have [died](#) since 2017, including two deaths by suicide. Advocates link these deaths to medical neglect, noting a deficit of qualified on site health care providers and the fact that Stewart is located a one-hour's drive from the nearest emergency medical facility. In July 2019, [Pedro Arriago Stewart](#), a Mexican national, died of cardiac arrest after complaining of abdominal pain.

In July 2018, [Efrain De La Rosa](#), died of apparent suicide while in solitary confinement at Stewart. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) refused to release the full results into its investigation into Mr. De La Rosa's death. In a press statement, GBI Deputy Director for the Office of Privacy and Compliance Ginny Davis stated that GBI made its decision to keep the results of investigation private after a CoreCivic attorney Stephen Curry called her attention to a federal regulation which prohibits states and local governments from disclosing information about federal detainees. In her [press statement](#), Davis characterized this communication from CoreCivic as a "warning letter."



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Key Areas of Concern

- Medical neglect
- Barriers to legal access
- Due process violations
- Under-staffing
- Lack of Spanish-speaking staff

In January 2018, [Yulio Castro-Garrido](#), a 33-year-old immigrant from Cuba detained at Stewart, died after contracting pneumonia and then falling into a coma from medical complications. In an official statement, ICE stated Mr. Castro-Garrido initially refused treatment, although this statement was later [revised](#) to say that Mr. Castro-Garrido “did not respond well” to treatment. Mr. Castro-Garrido’s family publicly criticized ICE for its contradictory statements regarding his cause of death. In May 2017, [Jeancarlo Jimenez-Joseph](#), a national of Panama, died of suicide after 18 days in solitary confinement. Jimenez-Joseph’s confinement in solitary followed an earlier suicide attempt. The GBI investigation of Jimenez-Joseph’s suicide [revealed](#) that officials at Stewart had failed to complete regular check-ins on Jimenez-Joseph despite his known history of suicide attempts and his own requests for increased mental health support

In May 2018, the University of Pennsylvania Law School Transnational Law Clinic and advocacy group Project South [requested an investigation](#) of Stewart and Irwin County Detention Center in Ocilla, Georgia, from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants. The letter cited concerns with rampant human rights violations at the two facilities. In an in-depth [report](#) released in May 2017, Penn State Law Center for Immigrant Rights’ Legal Clinic and Project South documented human rights abuses at Stewart, including medical neglect, barriers to visitors and legal access, lengthy periods of detention, inappropriate and retaliatory use of solitary confinement, and inadequate or inedible food. The report cited instances in which “hair, plastic, bugs, rocks, a tooth, and mice” were found in food and described the water available at the facility as green, foul smelling and not drinkable. The report also notes multiple instances of hunger strikes in response to poor conditions and prolonged periods of detention. According to the report, guards responded to these hunger strikes with excessive use of force and solitary confinement.

Individuals detained at Stewart also report prolonged detention and due process violations. In the previously referenced 2017 report by Penn State Law School and Project South, an immigrant from Nicaragua reported, “105 days after being detained, I was about to speak with a judge when an immigration officer told me I needed to sign some forms before I could see the judge. I didn’t know what it said, but it turns out I was accepting all charges as stated.” A 2016 [report](#) by the Southern Poverty Law Center found that immigrants detained in Georgia are less likely to be released on bond, face higher bond rates, and are more likely to be deported than immigrants detained elsewhere. As of July 2019, Georgia’s [immigration courts](#) have the second and third highest asylum denial rates in the nation - with 95-96% of all cases resulting in denial.

In April 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center filed a [class action lawsuit](#) against CoreCivic, claiming that the company was “[forcing](#) detained immigrants to work for as little as \$1 a day to clean, cook, and maintain the Stewart detention center in a scheme to maximize profits.” The lawsuit alleges that immigrants who refused to work were subject to solitary confinement and loss of access to necessities, including soap, deodorant, and food.

A group of concerned community members called El Refugio visit immigrants at Stewart Detention Center weekly and provide hospitality to their loved ones visiting from afar. As a network affiliate of Freedom for Immigrants, the group works alongside this and other human rights organizations to document rights violations and advocate for individuals detained. Reports and complaints by Freedom for Immigrants have cited a range of abuses at Stewart, including [hate and bias](#) toward perceived race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or disability; [sexual harassment](#) and assault; and [lack of public access](#).

Resources

- [Access to Law](#)
- [El Refugio](#)
- [Friends in Hope](#)
- [Southern Poverty Law Center Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative](#)

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