

DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

STATE: Texas

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 16

FACILITIES: El Paso Service Processing Center

CAPACITY: 840 (approx.)

Overview

In 2018 ICE briefly used federal prisons to detain migrants, including in La Tuna, Texas. The facility is [no longer used](#) for immigration purposes. However, it is possible that this facility could be used to house immigrants in the future.

El Paso Service Processing Center

The facility is owned and operated by ICE. ICE [hires contractors](#) to handle a range of services at the facility – such as providing supplementary medical staff ([InGenesis](#), via the ICE Health Services Corp.) and transportation ([Global Precision Systems LLC](#)). According to a [2016 inspection](#), the facility's total capacity is 840, with an average capacity of 808. The facility holds both men and women.

In October 2011, ICE [reported the death](#) of El Salvadoran national Mauro Rivera Romero at EPSPC. [An investigation](#) by ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) that same month found that Rivera Romero's death was due to medical neglect and that he suffered from an infection associated with immune-suppressed individuals. According to the OPR, Rivera Romero submitted multiple medical complaints and had to wait over 24 hours for care.

The investigation found that his death was preventable and OPR reported that EPSPC failed to comply with medical care standards. OPR's assessment echos the results of a [2010 inspection](#) by ICE's Office of Detention Oversight (ODO), which found that the people detained at the ESPC had to wait long periods of time before receiving medical care. In [September 2011](#) ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) conducted an inspection of ESPC via third-party contractor MGT of America. The EPSPC passed the inspection despite four reports of sexual abuse by guards and failed to mention the death of Rivera Romero or the deficient medical standards found by the OPR one month earlier.

In a 2016 inspection, ODO cited that in 2012 EPSPC was deficient in six out of the fifteen standards reviewed with no corrective actions initiated, and in 2016 eight out of seventeen standards deficient, with thirteen correction actions initiated.



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Areas of Concern

- Retaliatory & excessive use of solitary confinement
- Medical abuse & neglect Physical & verbal abuse by staff Lack of transparency in private contracting
- Force-feeding of hunger strikers
- Community access issues
- Prolonged detention
- Arbitrary denial of parole

The deficiencies found included insufficient information about processes regarding sexual abuse or harassment prevention and language barriers. The facility was [last inspected](#) in 2018 by the Nakamoto Group, which reported that the EPSPC met every standard under this inspection. However, the inspection shows that there were 52 grievances by detained migrants, none of which were resolved in favor of the detained person. A [2018 report](#) by Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General (OIG) cited significant concerns with the thoroughness of Nakamoto Inspections.

Journalists and advocates have documented a range of abuses at EPSPC, including excessive use of solitary confinement, medical neglect leading to death, psychological abuse, and use of force feeding to retaliate against hunger striker. According to a 2019 [press report](#), immigrants were sent to solitary confinement in retaliation for engaging in hunger strikes and due to an individual's transgender identity. Detained migrants and advocates have also [reported](#) "a culture of degradation and abuse" by guards at the El Paso facility, including threats, physical violence, verbal abuse, and mockery.

In late 2018, over 30 Indian and Cuban nationals [refused to eat](#), some for as long as thirty days, to protest verbal abuse and threats of deportation by EPSPC guards as well as lengthy lock ups. In January and February 2019, ICE force-fed these hunger strikers, causing nosebleeds and frequent vomiting. That same month, [49 members of Congress](#) called for an investigation into the use of force-feeding at ICE facilities. In March 2019, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) [launched an investigation](#) regarding the use of force-feeding. The results of this investigation have not been published on the OIG's website.

In June 2019, six Indian men initiated a [hunger strike](#) at the EPSPC, in protest of prolonged detention and systemic denial of parole. Again, ICE force-fed men participating in the second hunger strike, which was [described](#) in an affidavit by an independent doctor as "the worst medical care I have seen" citing health risks caused "...not solely from his hunger strike, but from the truly substandard medical care he is receiving in detention." A U.S. District Judge [criticized](#) ICE for the medical neglect that one of the asylum seekers participating in the hunger strike, Ajay Kumar, endured at EPSPC and recommended that hunger strikers be evaluated by independent doctors before force-feeding. After over 70 days of hunger strike, ICE [released](#) two of the original six hunger strikers, but deported the other men despite medical concerns on the dangers of travel without refeeding correctly. National medical organizations such as [Physicians for Human Rights](#) have highlighted the dangers associated with refeeding, which can include, amongst other symptoms, cardiac failure and sudden death.

Resources

- [Avid in the Chihuahuan Desert](#)
- [Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, Inc](#)
- [Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center](#)
- [Texas RioGrande Legal Aid](#)

"Again, ICE force-fed men participating in the second hunger strike, which was described in an affidavit by an independent doctor as 'the worst medical care I have seen'"