

WHAT IS IT REALLY LIKE TO BE IN ICE DETENTION?

EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS FROM
TWO FLORIDA IMMIGRATION
DETENTION FACILITIES



FACT SHEET: IMMIGRATION DETENTION OVERSIGHT

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Insights from Krome and FDC Miami—Two Florida Facilities Where Detained Immigrants are Held

BACKGROUND

Staff for Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Durbin visited two Florida detention facilities on June 4 and 5: Krome North Service Processing Center and Federal Detention Center (FDC) Miami. The visits are part of an ongoing Committee investigation of immigration detention focused on medical and mental health care, treatment in segregation, and access to counsel. Krome is managed by Akima Global Services—the same company that holds contracts with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at Guantanamo Bay and several other immigration detention facilities. FDC Miami is a Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facility that also houses ICE detainees. Committee staff visited Krome and FDC Miami after recent reports described dangerous overcrowding and lack of medical care at Krome and lack of access to counsel and lockdown conditions for immigrants at FDC Miami.

Since the Ranking Member issued a summary of a staff visit to two Louisiana detention facilities in May, three additional individuals have died in ICE custody, including one individual at FDC Miami. Eleven individuals have now died in ICE custody since the start of this Administration, including two individuals detained at Krome.

New ICE guidance indicates Members of Congress and their staff should provide advance notice of visits to detention facilities beyond what is required under the law, and ICE is attempting to bar all access to field offices where immigrants are being detained. ICE Field Offices are not designed for long-term detention, but those facilities are subject to congressional oversight under a longstanding provision included in Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations legislation, which permits congressional oversight of “any facility ... used to detain or otherwise house [immigrants]” and specifically notes that this permission should not “be construed to require a Member of Congress to provide prior notice of the intent to enter a facility... for the purpose of conducting oversight.”¹

KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM STAFF VISITS TO THE FLORIDA FACILITIES

The Trump Administration’s mass deportation agenda is resulting in dangerous levels of overcrowding and deteriorating conditions at facilities like Krome.

Overcrowding continues to be a major problem according to individuals recently processed at Krome. Committee staff spoke to several detained immigrants who confirmed public reporting of individuals being shackled on buses for hours and spending days in small holding rooms while awaiting processing. Interviewees described being held for up to 10 days in rooms where they lacked access to showers and beds, had limited access to food and water, and spent multiple nights sleeping on a concrete floor. Those processed at the end of May spent an average of three to five days sleeping on floors in crowded holding rooms before they were moved into a housing unit.

¹ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-47, § 527, 137 Stat. 460, 619 (2024).

Detainees also experience overcrowding in their “pods” or housing units after processing was complete. One individual described 90 to 100 men occupying housing units designed to hold approximately 60 people. Exacerbating the overcrowded conditions, interviewees reported the air conditioning does not function properly in all the housing units.

ICE was ill-prepared to address overcrowding caused by the large influx of detainees and has resorted to using large tents to house individuals.

To address overcrowding caused by the Trump Administration’s mass deportation campaign, ICE contracted with Akima to erect a large tent facility on the facility grounds that houses 250 men. Krome staff stated that individuals in the tent facility were generally processed within 72 hours and then deported. Committee staff spoke with individuals, however, who had spent several weeks in the tent facility and who estimated the population was well over capacity. They described approximately 370 men in the tent holding facility as of early June.

The Trump Administration’s ill-conceived mass deportation plan has resulted in the use of BOP facilities in which the conditions force detainees to live in de facto solitary confinement.

Immigrants detained at FDC Miami have been subject to lockdown for weeks, and only permitted to leave their cells for three hours a day. According to facility staff, lockdown is necessary to meet safety protocols. Four main elevators must be operational to end lockdown in the facility. Only two currently are operational and there is no timeline for repairing the remaining two. The aging elevators require specific parts that are no longer manufactured and must be newly produced each time one of the elevators breaks down.

Moreover, even when they are released from their cells, detained immigrants are not able to go outside. As a facility that primarily holds criminal detainees awaiting court proceedings, FDC Miami does not have any space where individuals have access to the outdoors. Detained individuals described how the long stretches of confinement take a significant toll on their mental health. Lockdown also limits their access to showers and phone calls, which must take place during the narrow three-hour release windows.

Immigrants at Krome struggle to receive adequate health care because staff failed to take their medical concerns seriously.

Immigrants detained at Krome report being unable to access adequate medical care because facility staff routinely failed to respond to their requests for treatment. Several detainees confirmed that the facility does not have an organized approach to sick calls; instead, it has instituted an ad hoc system where medical staff speak with only five men daily from each housing unit. The detainees also described fear of new people entering the overcrowded facility and introducing illnesses because the medical staff do not take medical concerns seriously.

One man described feeling extremely sick for days and requesting a COVID test. Several days after first exhibiting symptoms, he was finally provided a COVID test, tested positive, and was then placed in medical isolation. Another wheelchair-bound man described experiencing severe flu symptoms for multiple days before medical staff took his condition seriously and treated him. A third man described infections he developed in his legs after wearing rusty shackles during transport to Krome. He did not initially receive medical attention, and his infected legs became swollen and are now scarred.

Immigrants at FDC Miami also face obstacles accessing basic services and are forced to endure unsanitary conditions.

Staff at FDC Miami reported that sick call requests are prioritized based on the severity of the complaint and that medical providers are assigned to each floor by shift. However, multiple interviewees stated that requests were routinely delayed or ignored. Some reported having to purchase over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen through the commissary, which many could not afford.

Individuals also described unsanitary and degrading conditions—several shared that they had to use nail clippers left behind by others, lacked access to razors, and wore clothing left behind by those who had been released or transferred.

Bureaucratic red tape makes it nearly impossible for immigrants to access adequate mental health care at Krome

Problems with accessing care extend to Krome’s Behavioral Health Unit—a unit dedicated to assisting individuals with mental health needs. Committee staff learned that despite the great need for mental health services in immigration detention facilities across the country, the program—designed to accommodate 30 people—is not full. According to facility staff, this is in part due to the stringent requirements for admission to the program. Individuals are admitted to the program only if they speak English or Spanish, are free from certain disciplinary infractions, and can participate in programming. Despite specially-designed treatment for these individuals, the Administration’s desire to deport individuals is ever-present—Committee staff observed a flyer in a common room in the unit that asked, “Do you want to go home?” and provided information about how to self-deport.

Immigrants have limited opportunities to report complaints of abuse or neglect.

Several detained individuals described the futility of lodging grievances related to medical care. When one man asked facility staff to help access medical care, he was told ICE doesn’t have the “authority to force medical staff to treat you.” The man pointed out that because he is detained by ICE and has not received a response from medical staff, he has no other straightforward recourse but to lodge complaints with ICE. The inability to file grievances is consistent with concerns raised in the April 2024 DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) report issued after an unannounced visit to Krome.

Fear and chaos are key tools of Trump’s mass deportation agenda, with detained immigrants dreading transfer to remote detention facilities away from their families and lacking information about their cases.

Individuals at Krome described their fear of being transferred to detention facilities farther away from family members and loved ones. This ever-present fear is cultivated upon admission to the facility, with staff telling detainees that deportation is inevitable. Interviewees described facility staff making announcements during admission to the facility that individuals *will* be deported and that they can choose to be deported quickly or to remain in detention. Men described how they witnessed others immediately sign forms they thought would quickly effectuate their removal after hearing these statements from facility staff.

The threat of transfer continues throughout a detainee’s stay. Men described staff waking individuals in the middle of the night to be transferred with no clear explanation given as to why some immigrants stayed and others were moved.

The flow of individuals in and out of Krome is chaotic. Several individuals described instances of facility staff holding up photos of men to the glass of housing units and yelling through the glass for the men in the unit to confirm the individual was present. It was clear that the staff did not know if a given individual remained in detention. When Committee staff visited the facility, “count”—the process of accounting for individuals in the facility, which takes place several times a day—took nearly two hours.

Immigrants detained at FDC Miami are denied information on the status of their cases and have difficulty placing calls to legal counsel and family members.

Facility officials claimed that ICE deportation officers visit FDC Miami twice a week and hold office hours to respond to detainee inquiries. However, numerous immigrants disputed this, saying that deportation officers only come once a week and often are dismissive or unhelpful when asked about their case status unless the individual is seeking to self-deport. This leaves many immigrants without meaningful access to information about their legal proceedings and contributes to confusion and anxiety about their future.

Immigrants at the facility pay for 300 minutes per month for 15-minute calls that are followed by a mandatory one-hour waiting period before another call can be made. While detainees are supposed to have access to free phone calls with legal representation, many reported not knowing how to request attorney calls and instead using paid phone minutes to contact counsel. Combined, these factors make it difficult to maintain adequate communication with legal counsel and family members. When this issue was raised with BOP staff, they committed to hosting a facility-wide town hall to inform ICE detainees of their rights and procedures for making free legal calls.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- **Immigration detention is at a crisis point.** The Administration’s commitment to meeting arrest quotas and detaining individuals without criminal records has resulted in record detention numbers. Without adequate detention space, detained individuals are experiencing overcrowding and dangerous detention conditions.
- **People are being disappeared.** Asylum seekers, green card holders, and others with no criminal record are being swept up and disappeared into a chaotic, underfunded, and unsafe detention system.
- **The Trump Administration is barring lawful congressional oversight.** ICE has issued guidance that prevents members of Congress and their staff from doing their jobs. Under existing law, members of Congress may conduct unannounced visits, and their staff must provide only 24-hour notice prior to visits of *any* detention facilities, including ICE field offices, where immigrants are detained. ICE cannot change the rules governing immigration detention oversight by suddenly requiring advance notice for facility visits and exercising discretion to refuse entry to facilities.
- **This system is designed to punish, not protect.** Detainees are being denied medicine, sleep, clean clothes, and even sunlight. This punitive approach to detention humiliates and traumatizes individuals who, in many cases, are hardworking members of their communities seeking their day in immigration court. Because immigration detention in these facilities is so intolerable, immigrants may feel compelled to abandon their cases rather than remain detained in such unsanitary and unsafe conditions.