

Testimony of Rev. David Black

Senior Pastor & Head-of-Staff, The First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, before the Homeland Security Committee of the United States House of Representatives

22 April, 2026

Chairman Garbarino, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rev. David Black, and I am the Senior Pastor serving The First Presbyterian Church of Chicago. We are a community church, proclaiming the Gospel and serving our neighbors in partnership with artists and activists from across the City of Chicago.

I am aware that I am addressing a committee whose members mostly identify as Christian. For those who share my faith, my prayer has been that you will receive me not as a political adversary, but as your sibling and friend in Christ, accepting that we are mutually seeking to conform our lives and our labor to the love and justice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am testifying today on behalf of myself and countless other Americans of faith and conscience who have suffered extreme and arbitrary brutality at the hands of agents of The Department of Homeland Security. This department was created to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, but now, agents of ICE and CBP are causing terror, violence, and death in American communities.¹

Families across America are sheltering in their homes for fear of a father, mother, or child being abducted and deported without due process. Chemical warfare has been unleashed by agents of ICE and CBP against citizens and residents of American communities who pose no threat; banned chokeholds have been deployed by agents as routine practice.² People of all ages, from toddlers to elders, have been subjected to grievous harm from tear gas and other chemical agents thrown by ICE/CBP indiscriminately in their residential neighborhoods. In the greater Chicago area where I live, many of these incidents occurred *after* a federal judge issued a

¹ Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, § 101, 116 Stat. 2135 (2002).

Strickler et al., "Trump's DHS Immigration Enforcement Officers Shot 14 People From September 2025 to February 2026. Here's What to Know," NBC News, February 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ice-shootings-list-border-patrol-trump-immigration-operations-rcna254202>.

Thompson, "Caught in the Crackdown: As Arrests at Anti-ICE Protests Piled Up, Prosecutions Crumbled," ProPublica/Frontline, April 14, 2026, <https://www.propublica.org/article/caught-in-crackdown-ice-cbp-doj-trump-arrests-convictions>.

Schonder, dir., Caught in the Crackdown, Frontline/PBS and ProPublica, April 14, 2026, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/caught-in-the-crackdown/>.² Funk and Foy, "We Found More Than 40 Cases of Immigration Agents Using Banned Chokeholds and Other Moves That Can Cut Off Breathing," ProPublica, January 13, 2026, <https://www.propublica.org/article/videos-ice-dhs-immigration-agents-using-chokeholds-citizens>.

² Funk and Foy, "We Found More Than 40 Cases of Immigration Agents Using Banned Chokeholds and Other Moves That Can Cut Off Breathing," ProPublica, January 13, 2026, <https://www.propublica.org/article/videos-ice-dhs-immigration-agents-using-chokeholds-citizens>.

temporary restraining order against use of chemical weapons by ICE/CBP, showing deliberate defiance of the law.³ Countless Americans who assembled to peacefully protest and lawfully document these atrocities have been attacked by ICE and CBP agents with brutal, and sometimes deadly, force.

I am one of them.

On the evening of September 19, 2025, I joined a group of clergy and activists peacefully protesting outside the ICE Detention Facility in Broadview, IL. I went as a Christian minister, dressed in traditional clerical attire. I was motivated by the instruction Jesus gave his followers to welcome strangers and seek the release of captives (Matthew 25), and the broader biblical witness that God wills for us to treat foreigners as native-born citizens (Leviticus 19). I have been to the Broadview ICE facility repeatedly to bear witness to my faith, show solidarity with my neighbors who are being held in captivity, and to pray for the ICE agents who are persecuting them.

On that evening, I noticed masked ICE agents brandishing weapons from the roof of the facility. I felt moved to approach the building and call on them, in the traditional language of Christian faith, to recognize the spiritual consequences of their actions. With arms outstretched I quoted Jesus, urging them to repent and believe the Good News, because the Kingdom of God is near (Mark 1).

In response, the agents opened fire on me. They rapidly shot my head, face, and body at least seven times with exploding chemical bullets. These have been identified as Pepper Balls, which the manufacturer warns can cause “severe or permanent injury or death” when fired at “sensitive areas” such as the head, face, and neck.⁴ The attack knocked me to the ground and temporarily disabled me. Other protesters rushed to help me while the agents continued to fire on the huddle of bodies, rapidly pelting people at random and without cause. There is video of these events, which is available at this link: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/6ZVrTLyNlr>.

Shortly after this, at least 20 agents emerged from the facility in full body armor and no identification, brutally attacking protesters. On the street in front of the facility, they targeted the people who were down, including me, pushing and shoving us toward a driveway across from the facility and trapping about a dozen of us in a kettling maneuver. Already struggling to

³ Investigative Project on Race and Equity, “Feds Used Chemical Agents Dozens of Times in Chicago,” November 19, 2025, <https://www.raceandequityproject.org/article/feds-used-chemical-agents-dozens-times-chicago>.

“Border Patrol’s Bovino Called to Court After Being Accused of Throwing Tear Gas Canister in Chicago,” NBC News, October 24, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/border-patrols-bovino-called-court-accused-throwing-tear-gas-canister-rcna239609>; “Federal Judge Imposes Strict Restrictions on Immigration Agents’ Use of Force Against Protesters, Media, Clergy,” WTTW, November 7, 2025, <https://news.wttw.com/2025/11/06/federal-judge-says-border-patrol-chief-greg-bovino-lied-about-being-hit-rock-deploying>; Chicago Headline Club v. Noem, No. 1:25-cv-12173, Temporary Restraining Order, ECF 42 & Preliminary Injunction Opinion and Order (N.D. Ill. Oct. 9, 2025 & November 20, 2025).

⁴ United Tactical Systems, LLC, PPC™ Pepperball Patrol Carbine User Manual, Part No. PEP-21007 (Lake Forest, IL: PepperBall, April 24, 2023), 4.

breathe from exposure to chemicals from the Pepper Balls, I was cornered and shoved to the ground by masked ICE/CBP agents who proceeded to drench me with an orange chemical irritant, especially aiming at my head and face. While I was attempting to escape the kettle, officers kept shoving me and spraying the back of my head. By the time I had gotten away, the agents had soaked me in liquid chemicals from my head to my toes. I was wearing a heavy denim jacket, shirt and undershirt, heavy denim jeans, and long underwear. The amount of chemical spray deployed was such that it penetrated through all these layers and covered every part of my body.

I had trouble breathing and experienced a burning sensation on my entire body. A friend took my arm and led me away from the area, where in great agony I was offered eyewashes and contact lenses were removed from my eyes. At home, after showering and following decontamination protocols, I continued to experience the burning sensation throughout the night.

These attacks on me were apparently provoked by my Christian ministry and related advocacy for immigrants, especially my proclamation of the Gospel. Other clergy, including many Christians, also have been violently punished while exercising our First Amendment guarantee of free religious expression and our right to peaceably assemble and petition for a redress of grievances.⁵

Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Tricia McLaughlin later ridiculed me in a post on X, downplaying the severity of violence I and others suffered, and calling into question whether I am truly a pastor.⁶ This statement was followed by a large volume of letters, calls, and social media messages from people echoing McLaughlin's words, some calling for violence against me.

I am one of the hundreds of Americans who have been brutally and arbitrarily attacked by masked agents of ICE and CBP for protesting the actions of these agencies. President Trump's administration has characterized these protesters as "domestic terrorists" in a transparent ploy to justify increasing the use of force against them.⁷ In fact, these protests have been consistently peaceful, democratic, and rooted in faith. We have been motivated by love of our neighbors, love of God, and deep concern for the soul of our country.

⁵ U.S. Const. amend. I.

Jenkins, "How the Clergy Has Rallied Against the Trump Administration's Immigration Policies," NPR/Religion News Service, December 24, 2025. <https://www.npr.org/2025/12/24/nx-s1-5619298/how-the-clergy-has-rallied-against-the-trump-administrations-immigration-policies>.

⁶ "Top DHS Official Defends ICE Officer Who Shot Pastor with Pepper Ball," The Hill, October 9, 2025, <https://thehill.com/homenews/5547044-pastor-shot-pepper-ball-ice/>.

Religion News Service, "Judge Bars ICE from Taking Some Violent Actions Against Religious Activists, Journalists," October 9, 2025, <https://religionnews.com/2025/10/09/federal-judge-bars-ice-agents-from-taking-some-violent-actions-against-religious-activists-journalists/>.

⁷ Jonah E. Bromwich, "White House Use of 'Domestic Terrorist' Doesn't Match Legal Reality," New York Times, January 28, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/28/us/trump-minnesota-protesters-domestic-terrorists.html>.

It has become clear to many of us that repression of free speech and free exercise of religious witness are now among the main functions of ICE and CBP. Along with many concerned members of the clergy, I fear that this is only the beginning of a widespread crackdown on dissent and normalization of political violence against critics of the Trump administration. That administration, and Republican members of this committee tasked with oversight of DHS agencies, certainly have not called for transparency and accountability for this violence against Americans. To the contrary, the regime is “working overtime to hide the full scope” of the harm caused. The data on injuries shows only a fraction of the people agents have hurt, and no official count exists.⁸

It is crucial that the members of this committee understand that those who are most vulnerable and exposed to the violence of Homeland Security agents may be unable to testify publicly on their own behalf because of the risk of violent reprisals. Many of those suffering cruel and deadly violence are undocumented members of American communities following legal pathways to citizenship. We have some idea about that suffering, even if the larger picture is being obscured. Since 2002, at least 290 people have died in ICE custody, including at least 48 since Trump’s immigration enforcement crackdown commenced in 2025. I have included a list of their names as an appendix to this testimony. I ask that you humbly read each name and reflect on the child of God who came to America seeking safety, and instead of refuge, found death.

As a Christian and an American, I am horrified by the radical evil being perpetrated by my government. Moreover, I am outraged by the blasphemy of those who support brutal ICE and CBP tactics yet call themselves Christians —they make a mockery of the sacrifice of God’s love on behalf of the world. Jesus suffered torture and execution to liberate the world from the forces of spiritual evil that oppress it. Yet instead of living into Christ’s rich promise of a Kingdom of peace, freedom, and prosperity, many of those calling themselves Christian are blindly supporting institutions like ICE and CBP, even as they dominate, coerce, and terrorize American communities. The only righteous path forward is to abolish these agencies, and in contrition and true repentance, rededicate their funding to support programs that feed the hungry, sate the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, and care for the sick — for in the words of Jesus, “just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:31-46).

⁸ Curry Wimbish, “A Running Count of How Many People ICE Has Killed and Injured,” *The American Prospect*, January 29, 2026, updated April 14, 2026, <https://prospect.org/2026/01/29/ice-trump-killed-injured-list-dhs-cbp-border-patrol-renee-good-alex-pretti/>.⁹ ICE, “Detainee Death Reporting,” accessed April 19, 2026.

Deaths in ICE Detention — 2025⁹

(31 formally reported in ICE custody; some sources cite 33 including additional cases)

#	Name	Age	Nationality	Date	Location
1	Genry Ruiz Guillen	29	Honduras	Jan. 23	Krome Service Processing Center, Miami, FL
2	Serawit Gezahegn Dejene	45	Ethiopia	Jan. 29	Eloy Detention Center / Banner University Medical Center, Phoenix, AZ
3	Maksym Chernyak	45	Ukraine	Feb. 20	Krome Service Processing Center, Miami, FL
4	Juan Alexis Tineo-Martinez	44	Dominican Republic	Feb. 23	Centro Medico Hospital, San Juan, PR
5	Brayan Rayo-Garzon	27	Colombia	Apr. 8	Phelps County Jail, Rolla, MO
6	Nhon Ngoc Nguyen	55	Vietnam	Apr. 16	El Paso Processing Center, TX
7	Marie Ange Blaise	44	Haiti	Apr. 25	Broward Transitional Center, Pompano Beach, FL
8	Abelardo Avelleneda-Delgado	68	Mexico	May 5	Lowndes County Jail, Valdosta, GA
9	Jesus Molina-Veya	45	Mexico	Jun. 7	Phoebe Sumter Hospital, Americus, GA
10	Johnny Noviello	49	Canada	Jun. 23	Bureau of Prisons Federal Detention Center, Miami, FL
11	Isidro Perez	75	Cuba	Jun. 26	Krome Service Processing Center, Miami, FL
12	Tien Xuan Phan	55	Vietnam	Jul. 19	Karnes County Immigration Processing Center, TX
13	Lorenzo Antonio Batrez Vargas	32	Mexico	Aug. 31	Central Arizona Correctional Complex, Florence, AZ

⁹ ICE, “Detainee Death Reporting,” accessed April 19, 2026.

“List of Deaths in ICE Detention,” Wikipedia, last modified April 16, 2026,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_deaths_in_ICE_detention. NBC News, “ICE Releases Delayed Detainee Death Reports as 2026 Total Rises to 17,” April 18, 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ice-report-deaths-detainees-rcna340802>.

NPR Staff, “Deaths of Migrants in ICE Custody Hit Record High Under Trump,” April 17, 2026,

<https://www.npr.org/2026/04/17/nx-s1-5789092/deaths-of-migrants-in-ice-custody-hit-record-high-under-trump>.

KFF, “Deaths and Health Care Issues in ICE Detention Centers,” March 18, 2026, <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/deaths-and-health-care-issues-in-ice-detention-centers-under-the-second-trump-administration/>.

Kocher, “ICE Detention and Deportation by the Numbers,” Substack, April 16, 2026,

<https://austinkocher.substack.com/p/ice-detention-and-deportation-by>.

14	Chaofeng Ge	32	China	Aug. 5	Moshannon Valley Processing Center, Philipsburg, PA
15	Oscar Duarte Rascon	58	Mexico	Sep. 8	Eloy Detention Center / Banner Desert Medical Center, Mesa, AZ
16	Santos Reyes-Banegas	42	Honduras	Sep. 18	Nassau County Correctional Center, East Meadow, NY
17	Ismael Ayala Uribe	39	Mexico	Sep. 22	Adelanto ICE Processing Center, Victorville, CA
18	Norlan Guzman-Fuentes	37	El Salvador	Sep. 24	Dallas, TX
19	Miguel Angel Garcia-Hernandez	31	Mexico	Sep. 24	Dallas, TX
20	Huabing Xie	53	China	Sep. 29	San Diego, CA
21	Leo Cruz-Silva	34	Mexico	Oct. 4	Ste. Genevieve County Jail, MO
22	Hasan Ali Moh'D Saleh	67	Jordan	Oct. 11	Krome Detention Center, Miami, FL
23	Gabriel Garcia-Aviles	56	Mexico	Oct. 23	Adelanto ICE Processing Center, Victorville, CA
24	Kai Yin Wong	63	China	Oct. 25	South Texas ICE Processing Center, San Antonio, TX
25	Francisco Gaspar-Andres	48	Guatemala	Dec. 3	Camp East Montana, El Paso, TX
26	Pete Sumalo Montejo	72	Philippines	Dec. 5	Montgomery Processing Center, Harlingen, TX
27	Shiraz Fatehali Sachwani	48	Pakistan	Dec. 6	Prairieland Detention Center, Fort Worth, TX
28	Jean Wilson Brutus	41	Haiti	Dec. 12	Delaney Hall Detention Facility, Newark, NJ
29	Fouad Saeed Abdulkadir	46	Eritrea	Dec. 14	Moshannon Valley Processing Center, PA
30	Delvin Francisco Rodriguez	39	Nicaragua	Dec. 14	Adams County Correctional Center, Natchez, MS
31	Nenko Stanev Gantchev	56	Bulgaria	Dec. 15	North Lake Processing Center, Baldwin, MI

Deaths in ICE Detention — 2026

(17 as of April 18, 2026)

#	Name	Age	Nationality	Date	Location
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1	Geraldo Lunas Campos	55	Cuba	Jan. 3	Camp East Montana, El Paso, TX
2	Luis Gustavo Nunez Caceres	42	Honduras	Jan. 5	Joe Corley Processing Facility, Conroe, TX
3	Luis Beltran Yanez-Cruz	68	Honduras	Jan. 6	Imperial Regional Detention Facility, Calexico, CA
4	Parady La	46	Cambodia	Jan. 9	Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, PA
5	Heber Sanchez Domínguez	34	Mexico	Jan. 14	Robert A. Deyton Detention Facility, Lovejoy, GA
6	Victor Manuel Diaz	36	Nicaragua	Jan. 14	Camp East Montana, El Paso, TX
7	Lorth Sim	59	Cambodia	Feb. 16	Miami Correctional Facility, Bunker Hill, IN
8–11	<i>(4 additional deaths reported by ICE in Feb–Mar, names not yet fully publicized)</i>			Feb.–Mar.	Various
12	Damas <i>(first name not published)</i>	—	—	Mar. 2	Florence Detention Center, Florence, AZ
13	Jose Guadalupe Ramos-Solano	—	Mexico	Mar. 25	Adelanto Detention Center / Victor Valley Global Medical Center, CA
14–16	<i>(Additional deaths through early April)</i>			Apr.	Various
17	Aled Damien Carbonell-Betancourt	27	Cuba	Apr.	Federal Detention Center, Miami, FL