

Good afternoon distinguished Congress members. My name is Carolina Rivera Nelson. I am an attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, a lifelong Texan and a proud mother. Thank you for bringing attention to the rampant civil rights violations and injustice committed by ICE in Texas. The ACLU has long stood at the helm of defending the civil rights and liberties of all. Today, this is a fight that for many has tragically become a fight between life and death.

I'd like to shed light on the experiences of some of our clients who have faced abuse and neglect at the hands of ICE. What these individuals experienced is despicable, but not unique. Texas has more immigration detention facilities than any other state, with more than 16,000 individuals currently detained. Life-threatening medical neglect, physical abuse, and degrading conditions are rampant. The following individuals are victims of ICE's growing system of ruthless enforcement, inhumane detention, and deadly disregard for the law.

Elton Purvis is a Rastafarian priest, committed family man, and Type 1 diabetic originally from Trinidad and Tobago. Elton lived in Pennsylvania for 31 years and was a valid green card holder. Despite this, he was apprehended by ICE agents in May 2025 while on his way to his son's junior high graduation. Although he has no ties to Texas, Elton was detained at the South Texas ICE Processing Center in Pearsall, Texas for six months before he was eventually deported. This is the same facility where Wilber Garces Perez was taken just hours after being shot in the back by ICE agents last month. While at Pearsall, Elton was regularly denied access to the food and insulin that he needs to survive. It didn't matter that Elton sought all the necessary approvals. Or that he filed over a hundred grievances with ICE. Nothing worked. As a result of this medical neglect, Elton was found unresponsive in his cell at least three times and required hospitalization on numerous occasions. In Elton's own words, "Being in detention broke my courage. It felt like they were trying to kill me." In July, we filed a complaint with DHS under the Federal Tort Claims Act, one of the few legal remedies available to victims like Elton. The agency has not responded.

In May, we sued ICE over the inhumane conditions at Camp East Montana, a massive immigration detention tent camp in El Paso, Texas. Individuals at Camp East Montana experience severe medical neglect and disease outbreaks, violent uses of force and dangerous and unsanitary living conditions. In the words of Gerald Akari Angye, one of our named plaintiffs, "I have already experienced torture in my home country of Cameroon and I never thought I would experience such severely violent treatment by guards here in the United States of America. I have been beaten here . . . I am in pain and I am scared to be here. No one deserves such cruel treatment. We are all humans and deserve to be treated like it."

Finally, I'd like to share the story of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo. Tragically, Lorenzo was not afforded any due process—he was not asked for his papers, or detained, or brought before a judge. On a Tuesday morning, Lorenzo was on his way to work when he was shot and killed by an ICE agent who was on the hunt for someone else entirely.

Lorenzo was a humble, hardworking family man, he didn't need anybody to know his name. He cared deeply about protecting and providing for his family. He taught his children that good things come to those who work hard. On the morning of July 7, 2026, a good man was taken from this world. Senseless violence committed against our people, by our federal government. We still don't know what happened. Even though Congress gave ICE \$20 million for body cameras earlier this year, the ICE agents involved were not wearing body cameras. As attorneys for the Salgado family, we sent an expedited request to ICE for records relating to Lorenzo's death. ICE's response? That we did not provide sufficient evidence of a heightened public interest. If finding out what happened when a federal officer shoots and kills an innocent man on his way to work is not in the public interest, then I don't know what is.

ICE endangers our communities and must be stopped before anyone else is hurt or killed. We urge all members of Congress to use their authority to place checks on this violent and dangerous pattern of federally funded civil rights abuses.

We demand that Congress:

1. Conduct transparent and independent investigations into these events;
2. Leverage and increase the ability to conduct unannounced inspections of detention facilities;
3. Mandate enforceable and humane civil detention standards;
4. Require the use of body cameras for all ICE agents; and
5. Finally put an end to the detention of families and children.

I hope you hear these gut-wrenching stories and understand that these people have names and lives. They are entitled to civil and human rights, just like you and me. The right to due process, the right to be treated with dignity. Elton deserves better, Gerald deserves better, Lorenzo and his family deserve better.

Thank you for your time.