



For Immediate Release  
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## **Immigrant Groups Demand ICE Immediately Halt Raids, End Detention, Close Courts as Coronavirus Risk Increases**

**NEW YORK**-- Immigration activists in New York City-- which now has the highest number of coronavirus cases in the United States-- today called on Attorney General William Barr and Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf to immediately halt all ICE arrests, release people from immigration detention centers and close immigration courts to stop the spread of the virus.

[In a letter to the two officials](#), the groups raised the alarm that in the midst of a global pandemic, ICE is continuing to arrest and detain people for immigration violations. This is extremely dangerous and must end immediately.

One of the groups who signed onto the letters, the Immigration Defense Project, says that in the last 10 days it has received at least 13 reports of ICE arrests or sightings in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, Queens, Suffolk and Westchester County (New Rochelle).

The latest arrest occurred at a courthouse on the morning of March 16th in Suffolk County on Long Island.

One arrest occurred in New Rochelle, one day before Governor Cuomo announced the state-ordered containment area there. It involved 10 ICE agents claiming to be police.

IDP shared more information on the arrests [in a separate letter it sent to the New York City Council](#), asking council members to share vital know-your-rights information to their constituents.

The signers of the letter to Barr and Wolf said ICE's raids and immigration detention are creating an extreme risk of spread.

"ICE is actively continuing their community arrests, and transferring people from areas significantly affected by the virus into detention centers where, allegedly, they have not identified any positive coronavirus cases. This all but guarantees that COVID-19 outbreaks in detention centers are no longer a question of if, but when."

They also said “crowded immigration courts must be closed due to the serious public health and safety risks to judges, staff, attorneys, loved ones, and community members attending court.”

Releasing immigrants, halting ICE enforcement, and closing of all immigration courts is a matter of urgent public safety, the groups said.

[Click here to read the letter to AG Barr and Acting Secretary Wolf.](#)

[Click here to read the Immigrant Defense Project letter to the New York City Council.](#)

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### ***About the Immigrant Defense Project***

The Immigrant Defense Project (IDP) is a New York-based nonprofit that works to secure fairness and justice for immigrants in the racially-biased U.S. criminal and immigration systems. IDP fights to end the current era of unprecedented mass criminalization, detention and deportation through a multi-pronged strategy including advocacy, litigation, legal support, community partnerships, and strategic communications. Visit [www.immigrantdefenseproject.org](http://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org) and follow [@ImmDefense](https://twitter.com/ImmDefense).