



**IMMIGRANT
DEFENSE
PROJECT**

Press conference at Noon ET on Wednesday, May 20.

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Judge Halts ICE Attempt to Deport Plaintiff in Class-Action Lawsuit

Despite Order, Attorneys Remain Unable to Locate Hector Garcia Mendoza, whom ICE flew to Texas Earlier Today

Mendoza is Plaintiff in Lawsuit Seeking to Free Immigrants from Detention Center Plagued by Coronavirus

New Jersey - This evening, a federal judge blocked an attempt by Immigration and Customs Enforcement to deport Hector García Mendoza, a named plaintiff in a lawsuit demanding immediate release of all immigrants locked up at New Jersey's Elizabeth Detention Center (EDC). **Earlier today, ICE removed Mr. García Mendoza from EDC and flew him to Laredo, Texas in order to deport him**, sparking widespread community outrage. At this hour, attorneys are scrambling to locate Mr. García Mendoza so that ICE does not deport him in violation of the court order. A follow-up hearing is scheduled one week from today.

Advocates will share further information about these developments on a zoom press conference scheduled for Noon Eastern on Wed, May 20. Please contact Rachel Cohen at the Immigrant Defense Project to RSVP as a press participant; the conference will also be livestreamed [here](#).

Shortly after the filing of the class action lawsuit last week, attorneys for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) submitted a letter to the court stating the agency's intent to deport Mr. García Mendoza in the "immediate future." Attorneys from American Friends Service Committee, Immigrant Defense Project, and NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic filed a petition seeking a stay of the deportation on Tuesday morning. A judge granted the petition shortly before 6:00 PM eastern time.

Mr. García Mendoza, 30, had been detained at EDC since March 2020. He shared a dorm with dozens of other detained men, some of them ill. There was little space among the men, and the living spaces were filthy. An asthma sufferer, Mr. García has experienced chest pain and shortness of breath while detained, but the medical staff have refused him adequate treatment.

Last week, Hector joined three other named plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit seeking to free all people detained at EDC. The suit detailed the dangerous conditions faced by the people confined at EDC, a private immigration prison operated by CoreCivic in New Jersey through a contract with ICE. Last week, CoreCivic - the world's largest private prison corporation, with a long record of abuses - [announced that a guard at Elizabeth had died of COVID-19](#). Previously, [CoreCivic said 18 people detained at EDC tested positive for coronavirus](#).

ICE systematically deprives tens of thousands of immigrants of liberty, creating a system of detention across the country which did not exist a few decades ago. Detention - both private facilities and government-run - is rife with medical neglect and had seen multiple deaths from medical neglect even prior to COVID-19. Physical distancing is impossible in ICE detention and other forms of incarceration, with over 1,000 people detained by ICE positive for COVID-19 and two deaths of detained people confirmed.

ICE has always had extensive power to free detained immigrants. As part of broader efforts to end mass incarceration, immigrant rights advocates have long called for the ending of immigration detention and for resources to be redirected to health and housing.

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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 and follow [@ImmDefense](https://twitter.com/ImmDefense).

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice. Visit www.afsc.org and follow [@afsc_org](https://twitter.com/afsc_org)

The Immigrant Rights Clinic (IRC) of Washington Square Legal Services, Inc., at NYU Law School, is a leading institution in both local and national struggles for immigrant rights. IRC engages in direct legal representation of immigrants and community organizations in litigation at

the agency, federal court, and where necessary Supreme Court level, and in immigrant rights campaigns at the local, state, and national level. Visit [/www.law.nyu.edu/immigrantrightsclinic](http://www.law.nyu.edu/immigrantrightsclinic).