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IDP Releases Report on 2018 ICE Enforcement Across New York State Courthouses; Arrests Increased by 1700% Under Trump Administration

New report details the damaging impact of ICE operations on the court's ability to function properly and the threat to the judicial system

NEW YORK – January 28, 2019 – The **Immigrant Defense Project (IDP)** today released a new report, [“The Courthouse Trap: How ICE Operations Impacted New York’s Courts in 2018,”](#) detailing updated statistics and trends around Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) enforcement in New York State courts from January to December 2018.

IDP documented 202 reports of ICE arrests and sightings in New York State courthouses in 2018, a **1700% increase since the Trump administration took office in early 2017**. In addition to the egregious spike in ICE activity at courts, ICE’s tactics have become markedly more aggressive with agents assaulting immigrants and attorneys. New York State court officers have also actively assisted ICE agents, physically restraining immigrants and even conducting arrests on ICE’s behalf.

“This report shows that ICE is expanding surveillance and arrests in courthouses across the state, creating a crisis for immigrants who need access to the courts. We cannot allow ICE to turn New York’s courts into traps for immigrants,” said Alisa Wellek, IDP Executive Director. “The New York State legislature must act now to pass the Protect Our Courts Act to prevent ICE from continuing these harmful practices.”

The report highlights the below key changes in ICE courthouse operations in 2018, as well as a selection of stories from directly impacted individuals, some of which have never been publicly shared.

1. **ICE made more arrests and increased the physical presence of its agents in New York’s courts.** From 2017 to 2018, ICE operations in and around the courts continued to increase, keeping arrests at an unprecedented level. These operations increased by 17% compared to 2017 and by 1700% compared to 2016.
2. **New York State court officers actively assisted ICE agents with arrests.** In a handful of cases, court officers physically participated in ICE operations, helping ICE to restrain immigrants, leading immigrants to ICE vehicles, and even handcuffing and detaining immigrants on behalf of ICE.
3. **ICE made arrests in counties in New York it had left untouched in 2017.** Several upstate counties, including Orange, Rensselaer and Fulton reported ICE courthouse arrests for the first time. Westchester County reported the largest increase in arrests statewide. New York City

continued to account for about 75% of arrests statewide with Queens and Brooklyn reporting the largest numbers.

4. **The arrest and surveillance tactics employed by ICE agents became more violent and the brutality more commonplace.** Reports of ICE using violent force to conduct arrests—slamming family members against walls, dragging individuals from cars, and even pulling guns on people leaving court—have become commonplace. Witnesses to ICE arrests have called 911 to report that they were witnessing a kidnapping.
5. **ICE targeted particularly vulnerable immigrants including survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic violence, and youth.** ICE set no limits on who they targeted in New York’s courts—arresting immigrants in courts designed for human trafficking victims, pursuing survivors of domestic violence, and going after youth who are eligible for special forms of immigration relief like DACA.
6. **ICE officers refused to provide basic information or documentation, ignoring their own regulations.** ICE agents routinely refused to answer questions about who they were or why they were making arrests despite the fact that their internal regulations require them to provide this information.
7. **ICE’s courthouse operations expanded in the same year that the agency issued its first formal policy on courthouse arrests.** In January of 2018, ICE issued its [first policy](#) on courthouse arrests. Reports to IDP show that after this policy was issued, ICE agents expanded the reach of courthouse arrests.

While this report focuses on ICE activity in New York courts, it is critical to note that these arrests are occurring across the U.S. and impeding access to the courts. Various states have implemented meaningful [campaigns](#) to end ICE courthouse arrests, including the [Protect Our Courts Act](#) in New York.

For the full report, [click here](#).

For images, [click here](#).

For more information, please visit the Immigrant Defense Project at [ImmigrantDefenseProject.org](#). Join the conversation on social using #ICEOutofCourts and #ProtectOurCourts.

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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 and follow [@ImmDefense](#).

Media Contact:

Alejandra Lopez
Immigrant Defense Project
E: Alejandra@ImmDefense.org
O: 646-760-0589