

**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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**Speaker Corey Johnson, Immigration Committee Chair
Carlos Menchaca, Public Advocate Letitia James,
Comptroller Scott Stringer, Borough Presidents, and
Council Members Send Letter to Chief Judge Janet DiFiore
To Ban ICE From New York Courthouses**

New York courthouses have seen a 1100% increase in reports of ICE arrests or attempted arrests over the last year

City Hall, NY – Today, Speaker Corey Johnson, Immigration Committee Chair Carlos Menchaca, Public Advocate Letitia James, Comptroller Scott Stringer, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Queens Borough President Melinda Katz, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., and Council Members issued a letter to call on Chief Judge Janet DiFiore to ban U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents from New York State courts.

Over the last year, New York courthouses have seen a 1100% increase in reports of ICE arrests or attempted arrests, some of which are for individuals with no prior criminal history. In the process, several documented immigrants holding green cards and valid visas have been arrested as well. Many of these individuals are from particularly vulnerable groups, including those with mental health issues or those who have dealt with domestic or family violence.

This letter requests that Judge DiFiore utilize her constitutional authority to protect the civil rights of New York's immigrants and uphold the sanctity of our courts.

“ICE agents entering courts not only interferes with highly sensitive matters being handled in our court system, but also creates a culture of fear amongst both documented and undocumented immigrants,” said **Speaker Corey Johnson**. “If we are to be a City that respects the judicial process, we must keep ICE out of our courts. I join my colleagues in calling on Chief Judge DiFiore to do the right thing.”

“Our justice system should not be compromised by xenophobic policies coming from the White House. For this reason, I ask Chief Judge DiFiore to keep ICE agents out of our courts. Their presence at courthouses intimidates immigrants who might be witnesses in a case, or victims of a crime. They have the right to due process,” said **Immigration Committee Chair Carlos Menchaca**. As the Chair of the Committee on Immigration, I will continue fighting to ensure immigrant New Yorkers have equal access to justice.”

“The increased presence of ICE agents in our courts is a threat to our immigrants and our justice system,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**. “Immigrants are being unfairly detained and key witnesses and victims are too

fearful to come forward, creating a dangerous cycle of distrust. I urge our courts to take serious action to limit ICE's presence and ensure that our justice system is not compromised."

"Today, immigrants are living in fear, and ICE raids on New York courthouses are one reason why. When ICE deploys dragnet arrests in New York's courts, they are preying on those seeking justice. It's wrong, plain and simple," said **City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer**. "This is about right and wrong. When ICE uses our court system to target immigrants, they erode our values and don't make us any safer. It means witnesses to crimes are less likely to help and victims of domestic violence are denied protection. We are better than this – and New Yorkers must stand together to demand that ICE stop putting our neighbors at risk."

"Courts can't do the job of administering justice if crime victims, witnesses, and family members can't access them without being targeted and risking detention or even deportation," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "Just like in our city schools and other vital local government offices and facilities, ICE can't be given free rein to harass people in our courts."

"I stand shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues across the five boroughs in urging Chief Judge DiFiore to exercise her authority in protecting everyone who enters our court system. ICE's presence in our courts is counterproductive to public safety in our city and state," said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

"The presence of ICE agents at the courts severely disrupts and obstructs justice for everyone. Chief Judge DiFiore has long called for courthouses to be treated as sensitive locations, similar to schools, hospitals and places of worship," said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. "We stand with the Chief Judge in exercising her constitutional authority to protect the safety of all New York, which is at peril each time ICE agents appear at a sensitive location."

"The increasingly aggressive ICE enforcement tactics in and near courtrooms has a chilling effect on immigrant communities and denies justice to many victims of domestic violence and violent crimes and terrorizes both immigrant victims and witnesses into staying silent. This doesn't just hurt immigrants, it hurts all of us and makes our city less safe. If we want real justice in our justice system, we need ICE out of our courthouses," said **32BJ SEIU President Hector Figueroa**.

"Since the beginning of the year, reports of courthouse arrests have continued to pour into our hotline, and we saw an 1100% increase in arrests in 2017. These arrests will undoubtedly continue to escalate as ICE seeks to formalize their presence in courts. Each new arrest not only terrorizes our immigrant communities, but undermines trust in our state courts," said **Lee Wang, Staff Attorney at the Immigrant Defense Project**. "Today, we stand with our city elected officials to demand a stop to these unconstitutional arrests. We can and must do more to protect New Yorkers in our courts and defend the right of access to justice for all."

"ICE's unfettered presence in local courts undermines our legal system and deters immigrants and other New Yorkers from seeking justice. We can't allow this to continue to happen. We need immediate action from the Office of Court Administration and bold policy that addresses the core of this issue," said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-In-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. The Legal Aid Society is proud to join this call for action with New York City's elected officials, fellow defenders, activists and immigrant New Yorkers."

"It is appalling that ICE is targeting members of our communities at courthouses and New York State has not yet stopped them in their tracks," said **Javier H. Valdés, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York**. "Chief Judge DiFiore needs to consider the harm that this practice is doing to our communities – and how it makes all New Yorkers less safe – and take immediate measures to remove ICE from our courthouses."

"The safe and fair administration of justice depends on defendants and victims alike trusting that courthouses are places where they can appear without threat of detention or deportation. The chilling effect ICE's presence in courthouses has on crime victims in particular runs contrary to the interests of public safety and to our societal responsibility to give those harmed a safe place to seek resolution and help," said **Danielle Sered, Executive Director of Common Justice**. "There is no assurance the courts can provide to victims to counteract this chilling effect—other than the broadest possible removal of ICE from the court buildings. You simply cannot persuade

someone who is not a citizen that a building swarming with ICE agents is a safe place for them to seek justice: it is not safe for them, and they are right to judge it as such.”

“Claims by ICE that they are only targeting courts in high priority criminal cases are false. More and more often, clients charged with low-level offenses with no prior convictions, with valid claims to legal status, who are young, ill or otherwise vulnerable are being arrested in the courts,” said **Lisa Schreibersdorf, Executive Director of Brooklyn Defender Services**. “ICE in court obviously disrupts the lives of those arrested, their families and communities, but the daily presence of ICE also creates an environment of fear and confusion for advocates, witnesses and victims of crime, and other immigrant defendants just following their legal obligation to show up to their court dates. New York cannot claim to be a sanctuary city when its courts are unsafe.”

Full text of the letter can be found below:

February 16, 2018

Hon. Janet DiFiore
Chief Judge of the State of New York
NYS Unified Court System
Office of Court Administration
[25 Beaver Street](#)
[New York, NY 10004](#)

Dear Chief Judge DiFiore:

As elected representatives of immigrant and mixed-status communities in New York, we implore you to exercise your constitutional authority to promulgate policies that protect universal access to justice in New York State.

Since President Trump’s inauguration, lawyers and advocates have documented a 900% increase in arrests and attempted arrests by ICE in and near New York’s courts. ICE tactics at courts have become increasingly aggressive and degrade the constitutional rights of litigants and their lawyers.

Squads of ICE agents are conducting these enforcement operations in criminal and family courts alike. They are preying on people with documented mental illness, people who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence, immigrants who are documented and undocumented, and others from the most vulnerable populations in our state.

These arrests have created widespread fear of the courts in immigrant and mixed-status communities. Statistics and reports from across New York State confirm that immigrants are declining to appear in court or to initiate legal actions due to fear of ICE. This tragic result also impacts the effectiveness of local law enforcement and residents’ engagement with essential government services.

We urge you to protect the interests of our constituents and people throughout New York State, to protect the justice system’s integrity, and to end the ICE presence in our courts.

Sincerely,

NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson
NYC Public Advocate Letitia James
NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz

NYC Council Member Diana Ayala
NYC Council Member Ben Kallos
NYC Council Member Keith Powers
NYC Council Member Ritchie Torres
NYC Council Member Justin Brannan
NYC Council Member Karen Koslowitz
NYC Council Member Bill Perkins
NYC Council Member Jumaane D. Williams
NYC Council Member Fernando Cabrera
NYC Council Member Brad Lander
NYC Council Member Antonio Reynoso
NYC Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer
NYC Council Member Margaret Chin
NYC Council Member Stephen Levin
NYC Council Member Donovan Richards
NYC Council Member Laurie A. Cumbo
NYC Council Member Mark Levine
NYC Council Member Carlina Rivera
NYC Council Member Daniel Dromm
NYC Council Member Carlos Menchaca
NYC Council Member Deborah Rose
NYC Council Member Rafael Espinal, Jr.
NYC Council Member I. Daneek Miller
NYC Council Member Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
NYC Council Member Mathieu Eugene
NYC Council Member Francisco Moya
NYC Council Member Helen Rosenthal

cc: Hon. Lawrence K. Marks

ESPAÑOL:

Febrero 16, 2018

Hon. Janet DiFiore
Juez Jefe del Estado de Nueva York
Sistema de Corte Unificado del Estado de Nueva York
Oficina de Administración de la Corte
[25 Beaver Street](#)
[Nueva York, NY 10004](#)

Estimada Juez DiFiore:

Como representantes electos de comunidades inmigrantes y de estatus mixto en Nueva York, le pedimos que ejerza su autoridad constitucional para promulgar políticas que protejan el acceso universal a la justicia en el estado de Nueva York.

Desde la inauguración del Presidente Trump, abogados y activistas han documentado un aumento del 900% en los arrestos e intentos de arresto realizados por ICE en los alrededores de las cortes de Nueva York. Las tácticas de ICE en las cortes se han tornado agresivas y degradan los derechos constitucionales de los litigantes y sus abogados.

Escuadrones de agentes de ICE están realizando estas operaciones en cortes criminales y en cortes de familia. Ellos están acechando a personas con enfermedades mentales, sobrevivientes de violencia doméstica y sexual, inmigrantes con y sin documentos, y a personas de los grupos más vulnerables en nuestro estado.

Estos arrestos han propagado el temor a las cortes entre comunidades inmigrantes y de estatus mixto. Estadísticas y reportes en el estado de Nueva York confirman que los inmigrantes están negándose a ir a las cortes o a iniciar acciones legales por miedo a ICE. Este trágico resultado también impacta la efectividad del trabajo de nuestros oficiales del orden público a nivel local y la participación de nuestros residentes en importantes servicios gubernamentales.

Le pedimos proteger los intereses de nuestros constituyentes y de los residentes del estado de Nueva York, proteger la integridad del sistema judicial y ponerle fin a la presencia de ICE en nuestras cortes.

cc: Hon. Lawrence K. Marks

中文:

2018年2月14日

尊敬的紐約州首席法官 Janet DiFiore
紐約州統一法院系統 (NYS Unified Court System)
Office of Court Administration
[25 Beaver Street](#)
[New York, NY 10004](#)

尊敬的紐約州首席法官 DiFiore:

身為紐約移民和多種移民身分社區的民選代表，我們懇請您行使您的憲法權力，在紐約州頒布保護普遍享有的司法正義。

自從川普總統就職以來，律師和倡議人士記錄了聯邦移民及海關執法局（簡稱 ICE）在紐約州法院逮捕移民次數飆升900%。ICE 逮捕策略越來越具侵略性，並降低了訴訟當事人及其律師的憲法權利。

ICE特工隊正在刑事和家庭法庭進行執法行動。他們逮捕有證據記錄的精神疾病患者，家庭暴力和性暴力受害者，有證件和無證件的移民，以及來自紐約州最脆弱的其他人群。

這些逮捕造成了移民和多種移民身分人士的廣泛恐懼。來自紐約州的統計數據和報告證實，由於擔心ICE，移民拒絕出庭或害怕採取法律行動。這一悲劇結果也影響到當地執法和居民參與基本政府服務的有效性。

我們敦促您保護紐約州各地的選民和人民的利益，保護司法系統的完整性，並且終止ICE在全州法院逮捕移民。

副本遞送: 首席行政法官 Lawrence K. Marks

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