

The Delaney Hall Letters

Delaney Hall, a privately-operated immigration detention center in Newark, New Jersey, has been the epicenter of severe unrest and protests.

Inside, detainees recently concluded a weeks-long hunger and labor strike to protest overcrowded cells, unsanitary conditions, spoiled food, and alleged medical neglect.

Detainees, lawyers, and congressional representatives have reported inedible or moldy food, delayed medical care, and forced labor where workers are paid \$1 to \$4 per day.

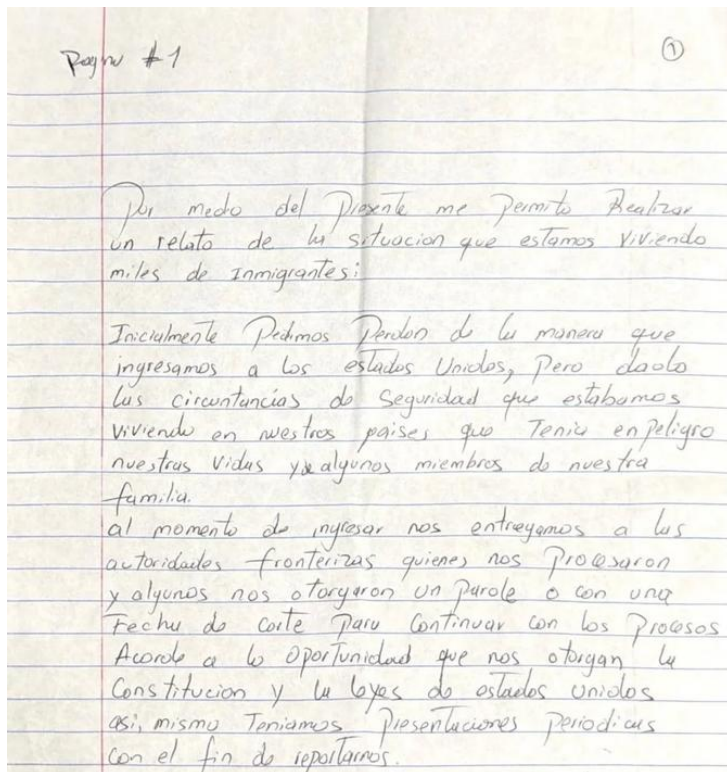
Detainees have also accused guards of using pepper spray and violence against striking individuals.

The State of New Jersey and the City of Newark have taken legal action against the GEO Group (the private company operating the facility) to demand full, unhindered access to health and safety inspectors, with Newark officials actively pushing for the facility's closure.

Demonstrations, labor union rallies, and family vigils held outside the facility have repeatedly escalated into chaotic clashes between protesters, federal ICE agents, and local police.

Since February of 2026, five letters have been smuggled out of Delaney Hall.

Movimiento Cosecha Cosecha, a national, non-violent movement fighting for permanent protection, dignity, and respect for all undocumented immigrants, provides photos of the original letters as well as translations on their website.



The First Public Letter Out of Delaney Hall

The first public letter written by detainees at the Delaney Hall ICE processing facility in Newark, New Jersey, was released and made public on **February 5, 2026**.

Titled "*El Grito de Nosotros*" ("Our Cry"), the initial handwritten letter in Spanish was co-signed by two dozen detained individuals

The translated text is below:

Through this letter, I would like to describe the situation that thousands of immigrants are currently living through:

First, we'd like to apologize for the way we entered the United States, but we were experiencing safety circumstances that endangered our lives and the lives of some members of our family.

Upon entering, we surrendered ourselves to border authorities who processed us. Some of us were given parole or a court date to continue our cases in accordance with the due process afforded to us by the Constitution and laws of the United States. We also attended periodic check-ins, obtained work permits and social security numbers, filed taxes, and were working legally and contributing to the economy. Therefore, we did not pose a threat to the country or the communities where we resided.

We know that ICE agents have orders to arrest immigrants. In our cases, we had already been processed and were complying with legal requirements. There was no judge's order for our detention or arrest, since we received a procedural benefit upon our entry, but the ICE officers did not take this into account, nor the fact that we had an immigration court date. They arrested us at scheduled appointments and at USCIS offices.

We have been subjected to court proceedings where lawyers are afraid to represent us because they say there is a presidential order to deport as many people as possible without considering or reviewing each case individually. Judges are denying a large number of cases, dismissing them outright.

Simultaneously, prosecutors are filing motions to send us to Latin American countries like Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras, countries with similar or worse conditions. Even people from those same countries are seeking safety and protection on U.S. soil. In some cases, the motion is to send a person to Uganda to present and defend their asylum case there.

This has forced many to request voluntary departure as the only option to return to their countries of origin, despite the danger we may face, if we are exposed.

In these courts, the judges inform the detainees that they can buy plane tickets to return to their country, but ICE officers refuse this possibility, telling us not to buy those tickets.

Furthermore, there is a contradiction in the processes for voluntary departures and approved deportations, as it takes two, three, or more months of waiting to be sent back to our country of origin.

We feel vulnerable, in a way, kidnapped or detained without justification. We see with profound helplessness and frustration that the right to due process & legal counsel were violated, and benefits granted in the 4th, 5th, and 6th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution were unacknowledged. In addition, families are being destroyed and separated, especially where there are minor children and nephews who are suffering a very strong psychological impact because they do not understand the situation, and in some cases, they were subjected to witnessed the arrests of their wives and fathers, who are devastated by the tragedy and the economic burden, since we are the providers and heads of our households.

Additionally, the ICE agents have arrested people with mental health issues, physical disabilities such as deaf and non-verbal, elderly individuals, and young people with juvenile status, with whom we have to live in the detention centers that are overcrowded. The flu is a constant problem among the detainees, as are stress, fever, and general body aches; which could lead to an outbreak of illness or an epidemic.

In addition to what was previously mentioned in my court hearing with the motion to send me to Ecuador, I did not have an interpreter in my language. I, Leonardo Villalba, with identification number A■■■■■■■■■, take responsibility for this statement, as I do not want my fellow detainees to suffer any consequences. Our American dream is safety and protection - with our families. Although this is a difficult situation, we trust in God and believe in American justice. On the following pages are the signatures of the detainees who will corroborate what has been stated.

The Second Letter

The second open letter from detainees at Newark's Delaney Hall facility, titled "S.O.S: A Second Letter From Delaney Hall," was released to the public on May 12, 2026. The letter—signed by 288 detainees—highlighted systemic issues including medical neglect, poor food and water quality, and arbitrary ICE arrests. It also preceded a broader hunger and labor strike that the detainees launched at the facility in late May.

The translated text is below.

Nº 1

By means of the present, we take the liberty of providing an account of the situation that thousands of immigrants are living in detention centers. In this case, we speak directly of DELANEY HALL NJ 07105.

Initially, we ask for forgiveness for the way we entered the United States, but given the circumstances we were living in our countries, which placed our lives and those of some members of our families in danger.

At the moment of entry, we turned ourselves in to border authorities, who processed us and some of us were granted "parole" or given a court date to continue with our processes, in accordance with the opportunity granted to us by the Constitution and the laws of the United States. Likewise, we had periodic check-ins in order to report to the authorities. We also obtained work permits, Social Security, we filed taxes, and we were working legally and contributing to the country's economy. We must also mention that within this group there are individuals who crossed the border, integrated into society, formed families, and have lived in the country for 10 years or more with their citizen children, who despite not having legal status have also been paying their annual taxes and have a clean record. We find individuals from the LGBTQ+ community with diagnoses of illnesses such as HIV, cancer, diabetes, heart problems, among others, who are not receiving proper medical attention for the aforementioned conditions.

Nº 2

We know that ICE agents have orders to arrest immigrants, but in our cases we had already been processed, we were complying with legal requirements, and there was no order from a judge for our detention or arrest, since from our entry we received a procedural benefit. However, ICE officers did not take into account the fact that there was already an immigration court date, and they arrested us during check-in appointments at USCIS facilities. Even with credible fear approved, we have been subjected to court proceedings where attorneys are afraid to represent us, because they state that there is a presidential order to deport as many people as possible without reviewing each case individually, where judges are denying a high number of cases, dismissing them.

There are days where judges CHEN SHANA W., HAWKES JOSHUA, and RAMIN RASTEGAB have more than 40 hearings to review and study how due process should be applied, yet within minutes they make final decisions issuing deportations and expulsions. Many hearings are canceled, leaving detainees waiting months for a court date.

In the same way, prosecutors file motions to send individuals to Latin American countries such as ECUADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, and even UGANDA in Africa—countries with equal or worse conditions of violence and persecution from which we are fleeing. Even individuals from those same countries are currently on U.S. soil seeking safety and protection so they may continue defending their immigration cases. This has led many people, under pressure, to accept and sign voluntary departure to their countries of origin at the expense of the danger to which we may be exposed.

Nº 3

In these courts, judges inform the detainee that they can purchase a plane ticket to return to their country of origin, but the ICE officer denies that possibility, evidencing contradictions among government officials themselves.

Likewise, there are cases of individuals who already have their voluntary departure signed and deportations approved by judges, waiting 2 or 3 months to be sent to their country of origin.

We feel vulnerable and, in a way, kidnapped—detained without justification—not to mention that we are being tortured physically and psychologically due to the poor food resources provided in these detention centers. We see with deep helplessness and frustration that our due process, rights, and defense have been violated, disregarding benefits granted under the 4th, 5th, and 6th Amendments of the UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION. Families are being destroyed and separated, where there are children, nieces, and minors who are suffering a very strong psychological impact because they do not understand the situation, and in some cases they have witnessed the arrests of their relatives, who have been struck by tragedy and the economic burden, since in most cases we are heads of household.

N° 4

It is public knowledge that agents have arrested individuals with physical limitations such as: deaf, mute, blind individuals, elderly persons, and even pregnant women.

We see young people with approved juvenile status cases, with whom we are living in detention centers. There is also a high spread of COVID-19 in detention centers, and the flu is constant among detainees, which could lead to outbreaks of illnesses or epidemics.

In addition to the above, in certain courts we do not have interpreters or translators, as was the case of Mr ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■, A■■■■■■■■■, who in his court had a motion for ECUADOR by the judge, since the court did not have a translator or interpreter.

We are certain that we are not being processed equally under immigration laws and the Constitution. We have seen fellow detainees with residency, U visas, T visas, among other similar cases.

We have seen judges in this detention center who are ready to carry out deportations and mass expulsions without properly reviewing cases. We live with anguish and fear of appearing in court.

We are witnessing how judges are disregarding decisions of federal judges, for example not honoring HABEAS CORPUS rulings decided by a FEDERAL judge, depriving us of our liberty.

No. 5

Judges CHEN SHANA W., HAWKES JOSHUA, and RAMIN RASTEGAR accuse us of being a danger to the United States of America or, alternatively, declare that we will flee from immigration agencies, even though they have adequate monitoring tools such as GPS ankle monitors and constant check-ins at immigration offices. There are individuals who have been detained for 5 months or more, who have been denied bond more than once despite having a clean record and an approved HABEAS CORPUS.

We sincerely and earnestly ask for help from Senators, Congress members, foundations, and organizations that collaborate with immigrants.

Our AMERICAN DREAM is the safety and protection of our families. We are in a difficult situation, and we trust in God and believe that justice will be done under the law of the United States of America, since it is a sovereign and constitutional country respected worldwide for upholding human rights.

On the following pages are the signatures of the detainees who certify what is written.

S.O.S

The Third Letter

Don't Give Up: A Letter From Delaney Hall

This letter was written in the midst of a massive work & hunger strike inside Delaney Hall. The authors describe the horrific conditions inside the facility, but the strike is not only about the conditions. Those detained at Delaney are demanding their freedom.

The translated text of the letter is below:

Date: May 26, 2026

Location: Delaney Hall Detention Facility - ICE

Communique

We, the detainees at the Delaney Hall Detention Facility, wish to express our objection to the violation of our rights as immigrant human beings. We, the detainees, are demanding our progressive release, based on the fact that our arrests were illegal; immigrants to this country have the right to await our pending immigration proceedings outside of prison; therefore, we demand to be released on bond or parole so that we may complete our proceedings.

Furthermore, we call for greater efficiency in our judicial processes, as well as greater effectiveness and urgency for those who request and sign their voluntary release; we believe it is unjust to keep people who wish to leave of their own free will in custody for up to three months.

In addition to the unlawful and forced detention of most of us who find ourselves locked up here, there is the inhumane treatment that all detainees in this facility endure on a daily basis. The company in charge (GEO) fails to meet the basic conditions necessary to protect our health and our lives. To their administrative incompetence, we must add the following injustices and irregularities perpetrated by ICE and GEO:

Food containing worms or in a state of decay.

Unresolved issues, particularly regarding the bathrooms, which are in terrible and inhumane condition.

Ventilation problems.

Serious health issues: most people have a persistent flu with phlegm that won't go away; many have conjunctivitis, urinary tract infections, fever, and coughs.

Medical care issues:

If you're sick, you have to submit a request that takes two weeks to be answered—or you never get a response at all.

Nurses refuse to treat you right away

They only prescribe Tylenol for all ailments

The nurses' exact words: "We're not a PHARMACY"

ICE agents coerce detainees into signing deportation orders

There is no emergency protocol: in cases of falls or attacks, emergency response arrives an hour late

Judges' rulings are highly questionable; most bond requests are denied without legal basis

Detainees are forced to work, in most cases without pay, or for \$1 an hour

We appreciate the support of everyone who is protesting outside the facility. We want you to know that you give us the strength and determination to keep going. Please, DON'T GIVE UP!

We ask all relevant authorities for an urgent response and look forward to hearing from them. With the utmost respect, the detainees at the Delaney Hall facility.

God bless you!

The Fourth Letter

"We demand freedom"

A letter from Delaney Hall

1.

5/31/2026

Through this letter, we will provide an account of the events that have taken place since the 22nd of May, 2026, when the hunger strike began at the "Delaney Hall" facility, where people detained have all voluntarily stopped working and assisting with facility operations. Since the strike began, we have been subjected to reprisals, discrimination, mockery, mistreatment, and threats, mainly from "GEO" staff. Here are some names we were able to identify: Lieutenant L■■■■■, Supervisor M■■■■■■■■■, F■■■■■ M■■■■■■■■■ (Case Manager), M■■■■■■■ (administrator), the facility director and shift officers, J■■■■■ (in charge of the kitchen).

They constantly threaten to deport us, transfer us to punishment units, and move us from one detention center to another; they take photos of us in the dormitories without our consent and tell us that we have no rights here.

Through these threats, they are trying to force us to work in all areas of the facility (cleaning, kitchen, maintenance, laundry, floor polishing) and are trying to force us to go down for meals by making us sign a list so they can track who goes down and who doesn't, in order to punish those who aren't eating.

2.

On May 25, we were gathered in the common room; the facility's director, F■■■■■ M■■■■■■■, and the administrator, M■■■■■■■, wanted to speak with the leaders of the hunger strike to identify them.

They were upset when we told them there was no leader and that the strike was a collective effort. That's why they took retaliatory action against the young man named "■■■■■■," the person who helped with translation.

That's why the "GEO" staff tried to take him away in handcuffs, which all of us, seeing the injustice, wanted to prevent by peacefully blocking their path with our hands raised so that they wouldn't take him away, in return we received from them: beatings, pepper spray, and from "ICE," a riot squad came up spraying pepper spray throughout the facility, causing many people to be rushed to the hospital - one due to the beatings and others affected by the gas. To this day, we haven't heard anything about those people. They've restricted our access to tablets, visits, and the common room. They only open it on a limited basis as a form of punishment.

As a result of all this, we feel psychologically impacted and are plagued by the fear that they might carry out their threats for no reason at all.

3.

Judges, without checking the cases, order expulsion in two or three hearings, either to the country of origin or to a third country, also 95% of bond hearings are denied claiming that we are at flight risk, even though they don't have actual arguments. Through these rulings there are people who are here from 3 months to a year and a half. We ask for the bonds to be revised since we are fathers and mothers with no criminal record and we have contributed to this beautiful country.

We deserve to be free and to complete the process at home with our families, given the excessive amount of time we have spent in this prison.

We could be released, even if it means being under supervision, required to report regularly, or wearing an ankle monitor. The conditions in this prison are not fit for human beings over such a long period of time: medical neglect, water unfit for consumption, food that is past its expiration date and in poor condition, bathrooms that are unusable, and ventilation systems that have never been maintained and because of this, we are constantly sick.

We demand freedom, a fair trial, and for our rights to be respected.

S.O.S

The Fourth Letter

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The translated text is below.

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They constantly threaten to deport us, transfer us to punishment units, and move us from one detention center to another; they take photos of us in the dormitories without our consent and tell us that we have no rights here.

Through these threats, they are trying to force us to work in all areas of the facility (cleaning, kitchen, maintenance, laundry, floor polishing) and are trying to force us to go down for meals by making us sign a list so they can track who goes down and who doesn't, in order to punish those who aren't eating.

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wouldn't take him away, in return we received from them: beatings, pepper spray, and from "ICE," a riot squad came up spraying pepper spray throughout the facility, causing many people to be rushed to the hospital - one due to the beatings and others affected by the gas. To this day, we haven't heard anything about those people. They've restricted our access to tablets, visits, and the common room. They only open it on a limited basis as a form of punishment.

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We deserve to be free and to complete the process at home with our families, given the excessive amount of time we have spent in this prison.

We could be released, even if it means being under supervision, required to report regularly, or wearing an ankle monitor. The conditions in this prison are not fit for human beings over such a long period of time: medical neglect, water unfit for consumption, food that is past its expiration date and in poor condition, bathrooms that are unusable, and ventilation systems that have never been maintained and because of this, we are constantly sick.

We demand freedom, a fair trial, and for our rights to be respected.

S.O.S

The Fifth Letter

We Demand Justice"

A letter from the women detained at Delaney Hall, written on the day the hunger and labor strike began.

The translated text is below.

1.

5/22/2026

We are writing this letter from the Delaney Hall detention center, with the intention of requesting help from the authorities due to the injustices we have experienced.

First of all, we apologize for entering the United States illegally and the inconveniences this may cause. We know that some people have come to the United States and caused a lot of harm. We apologize for the immigrants who have not known how to value or respect the laws of this country. Most of us have emigrated to this country because human rights are not respected in our countries. Many of the women who are detained here have been victims of sexual abuse, rape, and persecution in our countries, which forced us to seek a second chance in this country, which we have come to consider our home.

We request help due to the constant violation of our Constitutional and immigration rights, violation of due process. Most of the women detained at this center were illegally detained by ICE.

2.

We were taken at the entrances of our immigration court check-ins, at our jobs, taking our kids to school. Most of the women at this center have social security, tax statements, and were attending their immigration court dates, hoping to win their cases and thus obtain a life of peace and without violence. We believed that by going to court and appearing before ICE, everything would be fine because we are not criminals, but it wasn't like that. ICE arrested us, and during the process, we have been treated like criminals, shackled hand and foot, subjected to excessive force, and subjected to racist insults! The majority is afraid to speak out because they think that denouncing the abuses at the hand of ICE will affect their immigration process.

The processes have been unjust, bonds are denied. Women like ■■■■ ■■■■ (A■■■■■■■■■■), ■■■■ ■■■■ (A■■■■■■■■■■), ■■■■ ■■■■ (A■■■■■■■■■■), and ■■■■ ■■■■ (A■■■■■■■■■■), women who went to all their court dates, who have never committed a crime in their entire lives, and yet they are labeled a flight risk and have been denied their constitutional right according to the Eighth amendment.

■■■■■ has 11 years living in the US, has a valid work permit and two US citizen children. In minutes, Judge Shana Chen gave her an order of removal.

■■■■■ has been living in the US for 34 years, this is her home, she has four US citizen children, and was also denied bond.

3.

■■■ is a Colombian woman who is the main benefactor of a shelter that helps animals called Refugio Manano, she is a good person who has not committed crimes and is detained here.

Sadly, we also have cases of young adults, including underage, who were in high school, college and university that have a juvenile status and lead normal lives, studying in order to create a better world. Women like ■■■■ 18 years old, ■■■■ 18 years old, ■■■■ 21 years old.

Some women have been detained for too long, waiting for a decision on their Habeas Corpus.

■■■■■ has been detained for nine months, has a ten year old with heart disease that's not being treated because her mother cannot renew their health insurance due to being unjustly imprisoned.

■■■■■ married to an American citizen, and has no charges. She has been detained and without a response for 5 months.

■■■■■ has been detained for one year and five months, with a CAT case approved, and ICE tried to send her to the Democratic Republic of Congo illegally.

4.

■■■■■ has been deprived of her freedom for nine months. She suffers from post-traumatic stress because she was a victim of atrocious crimes in her country. She suffered a breakdown because she was sexually assaulted by a worker at the detention center. She was taken away 8 days ago, and her family still knows nothing about her.

■■■■■ is a Cuban woman who managed to escape the regime in her home country. She has a 17-month-old American baby. Her baby cries every night because she misses her mom.

■■■■■ has been detained for three months without any legal process. She has not been given a court hearing, and she has 3 children waiting for her at home. All the pain and suffering that these families have to endure is heartbreaking.

■■■■■ she was detained postpartum. Her baby was two months old when she was arrested and she has been detained for three months. Her family brings her the baby, but he doesn't recognize her.

■■■■■ was two months pregnant and lost her baby in the detention center due to medical malpractice. They erased her record from the system and now they say that her pregnancy was psychological.

5.

■■■■■, her 10 year old son is alone, and is being cared for by one of her friends.

■■■■■ has a daughter with an autoimmune disease. She is only in the United States for the experimental treatment that might be able to save her daughter's life.

The judges are overwhelmed. The immigration courts are collapsing. Our processes are affected and with them, our rights. People with U visas, T visas, permanent residency, juvenile status, are all trapped without legal justification, illegally arrested by ICE. We are all scared because we have seen how people are being deported without due process. Some are forced to assist their court appointments without an interpreter and are ordered deported without even knowing it. Others are sent to third world countries like Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala, and even Africa. They've sent people with issues of violence, of gender violence. Africa has a health crisis with an outbreak of yellow fever and ebola. The hospitals they are sending us to in those countries are overwhelmed. We live with fear. We see how they deport us to unsafe countries without thinking about our safety and our lives.

Each one of us pray, we are from different cultures, nationalities, and religions, but at the end of the day we all pray to the same God, help with our process, we pray for our families, for other detainees that we don't know their names but are here, women that are vulnerable without attorneys, without families, completely alone.

6.

We are all affected by the same crisis that affects all the immigrants. The treatment we received from this center is deplorable from screams, racism, and bad medical attention.

■■■■■■■■ was diagnosed with tuberculosis, which has not been treated. She is living with 63 other detainees, where everyone is at risk of contracting this disease due to the negligence of the doctors and the detention center. We are all afraid for our health. The water we drink is not potable, and the food does not have the necessary nutrients.

They force us to work in cleaning, and if we refuse the officers threaten to take away our tablets, which are our only means of communication with our families. Some women have been victims of sexual assault by a guard who who gropes them during a food search and leers at them.

The pain and fear are taking a physical toll on us, we are losing our hair, some of us are suffering from anxiety attacks, we cannot sleep, and we have no energy for anything. We are depressed from being separated from the people we love.

7.

The confinement is hurting us because it has inflicted wounds upon the heart of every detainee, wounds of hopelessness and fear. We are normal women. We are not criminals. We are mothers, daughters, sisters, we do not deserve the punishment that has been inflicted upon us. It is unjust, cruel and inhumane. We appeal for assistance of any kind to ensure that our cases are reopened. We ask for the release of those suffering from physical and psychological health issues. We specifically request the release of mothers and people who have not committed crimes, so that they may pursue their legal proceedings while free. We further request that the Habeas Corpus petitions be addressed with the utmost urgency, and that immigration laws and the due process be fully respected.

We Demand Justice