

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 17, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Ronald D. Vitiello  
Acting Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
801 I Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C., 20536

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Director Vitiello:

We write to express our deep concern about the treatment of immigration detainees at the Adelanto Detention Center. On September 27, 2018, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a report titled *Management Alert- Issues Requiring Action at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in Adelanto, California*.<sup>1</sup> This report details horrific conditions such as bedsheets being tied like nooses in detainee rooms, inadequate medical treatment of detainees, and inappropriate segregation of detainees. The OIG directs the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to conduct a full review of the Adelanto ICE Processing Center. We concur with this assessment and would like ICE to provide details on how it plans to bring the Adelanto facility into compliance with ICE's 2011 *Performance-Based National Detention Standards* (PBNDS), as well as answer questions about current practices at the facility.<sup>2</sup>

On August 15, 2018, a delegation of Members of Congress traveled to the Adelanto facility, where we raised questions about reported hunger strikes occurring at the facility and a lack of access to adequate medical care. The officials whom we met with denied these allegations. Congresswoman Judy Chu also visited the facility on July 7, 2014 and asked questions about the denial of medical treatment, which were similarly not addressed by the staff at Adelanto.

Unlike our planned visits, the recent OIG report was compiled after an unannounced visit to the Adelanto facility in May 2018, just three months before our congressional visit to the same facility. During the visit, inspectors saw bedsheets hung like "nooses" in numerous rooms. This is extremely distressing given that a man committed suicide by hanging himself from bedsheets last year and seven more detainees attempted suicides between October 2016 and July 2018. It is

---

<sup>1</sup> OIG 18-86 Management Alert- Issues Requiring Action at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in Adelanto, California. Office of Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security. September 27, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> 2011 Operations Manual ICE Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS) (Revised December 2016).

clear from reading this report that we were not told the truth about conditions at the facility during our visit. DHS and ICE must act swiftly to overhaul current practices to ensure the safety and health of detainees.

The OIG report states that “ICE must prioritize addressing the issue of sheets in detainee cells, as they represent the potential to assist suicide acts.” In addition, the PBNDS stipulates that all facility staff members receive annual training on effective methods for identifying significant self-harm and suicide prevention and intervention with detainees, and that any detainee at risk for self-harm should receive treatment and therapeutic follow up.<sup>3</sup> In our view, facility personnel who see bedsheets hanging like nooses and joke about “failed suicides,” as described in the report, are not properly responding to the high risk of suicide these conditions indicate. We would like answers to the following questions:

1. How often are trainings for identifying significant self-harm and suicide prevention trainings held at Adelanto for facility employees?
2. How many current facility employees who interact with detainees have completed the training in 2018 at Adelanto?
3. How many of these detainees with nooses in their rooms were referred to a mental health provider for evaluation?
4. How soon after such a referral does an evaluation of the detainee by a mental health professional take place?

We are also very concerned about the lack of timely access to medical care for detainees. In this most recent report, the OIG concluded that “detainees do not have timely access to proper medical care” and that they are “placed on waitlists for months, and sometimes years to receive basic dental care, resulting in tooth loss and unnecessary extractions in some cases.” The report also finds that from November 2017 to April 2018, detainees filed 80 medical grievances with the center for not receiving urgent care, not being seen for months for persistent health conditions, and not receiving prescribed medication. This is in direct violation of the 2011 PBNDS, which states that detainees should have “access to appropriate and necessary medical, dental and mental health care, including emergency services.”<sup>4</sup> In addition, inspectors witnessed doctors asking detainees questions not in their native language, creating uncertainty as to whether the detainees understood what the doctor was telling them. The 2011 PBNDS stipulates that every facility should provide “staff or professional language services necessary for detainees with limited English proficiency (LEP) during any medical or mental health appointment, sick call, treatment, or consultation.”<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Los Angeles Times recently reported that detainees had started a hunger strike to improve medical care in July 2017.<sup>6</sup> Based on these reports we have the following questions regarding access to medical professionals for detainees:

---

<sup>3</sup> Id. Pg. 331

<sup>4</sup> Id. Pg. 257

<sup>5</sup> Id. Pg.260

<sup>6</sup> Andrea Castillo, “L.A. immigrant who spent six months in detention describes harsh conditions at Adelanto facility”, Los Angeles Times <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-romulo-avelica-adelanto-20181008-story.html>, October 8, 2018.



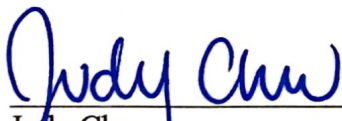
1. How many medical professionals are currently employed at the Adelanto facility?
2. What is the ratio of medical staff to detainees?
3. What type of oversight or review is conducted on medical professionals serving the facility?
4. Are medical professionals able to communicate with detainees in their native language? If not, are translators made available to help detainees communicate with the doctors and dentists?


Finally, the OIG report details the segregation practices of detainees, and characterizes these actions being taken prematurely and inappropriately. This practice raises serious questions about the due process rights of these detainees. Detainees should only be placed in segregation if they are found guilty of a prohibited act or rule and a written order is issued by the disciplinary panel chair. The OIG report details detainees being placed in segregation before a final written order was issued, placing detainees in disciplinary and administrative segregation together, and receiving inadequate communication assistance when placed in disciplinary segregation. For these reasons, please answer the following questions:


1. How many detainees are currently in disciplinary segregation? How many are in administrative segregation?
2. Of the detainees in disciplinary segregation, how many have been issued a written order by a disciplinary panel chair, finding them guilty of a prohibited act?
3. What types of legal services or information is conveyed to detainees about their right to appeal a decision? Are detainees with Limited English Proficiency provided translators?

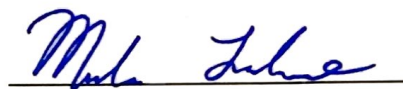
Please answer our specific questions about current policies at the Adelanto facility in writing, as well as details on how DHS and ICE are planning to address the issues raised in the OIG report. In addition, we request a meeting to discuss the OIG report and ICE's oversight of its contracted facilities.


Sincerely,

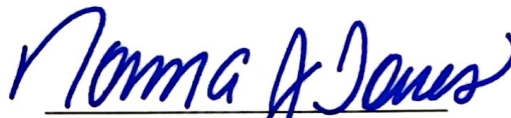
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

  
Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

  
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

  
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress

  
Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

  
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

  
Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress