



BROOKLYN  
DEFENDER  
SERVICES



June 7, 2021

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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

***Immigration Advocates Condemn “Disappearance” of  
Detained Clients After Sudden ICE Transfers, Refusal to  
Provide Any Information***

***In Letter to ICE, Defense Attorneys and Advocates Call for  
Transparency and the Release of Detained Immigrants***

(New York, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders – New York City’s defender organizations providing free legal representation to detained immigrants through the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), along with Make the Road New York, New York Legal Assistance Group, and UnLocal, which provide free legal representation to immigrants through the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative – sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) condemning recent and sudden transfers of several detained clients in the NYC-area to ICE detention centers across the country in Louisiana, Alabama, and Pennsylvania. Advocates are calling for ICE to cease out-of-state transfers and immediately release all recently-transferred individuals as well as all those currently detained in the NYC-area.

In many cases, detained individuals seemed to have simply disappeared, with ICE deportation officers refusing to respond to reasonable inquiries from counsel about their clients' whereabouts. Additionally, ICE/jail correctional officers have spread inconsistent and frightening information among detained people about mass transfers, especially at the Hudson County Correctional Facility.

These transfers, which happened without notice to the attorneys of record or to even detained individuals themselves, have serious implications for an immigrant's ability to access counsel, evidence, and witnesses for their cases, and to contact and be supported by their family members and other loved ones.

**The letter states:**

*For the people we represent, transfers are a frightening and dehumanizing experience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they pose an added and entirely avoidable danger to the health of our clients and communities given ICE's lack of a national vaccination strategy and continued COVID-19 outbreaks in ICE facilities...*

*ICE has repeatedly chosen to continue to detain and even transfer people who are not enforcement priorities at unnecessary government expense and at the risk to public health and safety as such transfers have unequivocally exacerbated the COVID-19 pandemic...*

*We call on ICE to immediately cease transfers of our clients. The practice of transferring detainees without notice to undisclosed locations where they are deprived of access to their families and counsel is callous and unnecessary, especially when it is entirely within ICE's power and discretion to release them instead. At minimum, ICE must provide written and advance notice of any transfers. ICE's own National Detention Standards revised in 2019, provide, at section 7.2, "Detainee Transfers," that "[a]t the time of the transfer, ICE/ERO will provide the detainee, in writing, with the name, address and telephone number of the facility he or she is being transferred to and contact the attorney of record.*

**BACKGROUND:**

The New York Family Immigrant Unity Project (NYIFUP) is the nation's first public defender system for immigrants facing deportation—defined as those in removal proceedings before an immigration judge. Funded by the New York City Council since July 2014, the program provides a free attorney to almost all detained indigent immigrants facing deportation at the Varick Street Immigration Court in New York City.

The Rapid Response Legal Collaborative (RRLC) provides critical free legal support and representation to immigrants with final orders of removal. Jointly funded by the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the NYS Office for New Americans, RRLC assists detained immigrants and those at risk of ICE detention.