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

In Response to Potential Imminent Mass Transfer of Immigrants Detained at Essex County Correctional Facility, NYIFUP Calls on ICE to End Transfers, Release Those in its Custody Throughout the Tri-state Area

(New York, NY) – In response to reports from local immigration attorneys, advocates and their clients that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) plans to abruptly mass transfer roughly 50 people from its custody at New Jersey’s Essex County Correctional Facility to remote detention centers throughout the country, **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)** – called on ICE to end the practice of transfers and to immediately release all recently transferred individuals as well as all those currently detained locally.

“Immigration detention is inhumane and immoral, and these transfers of detained immigrants to unknown locations only exacerbate this cruelty,” said **NYIFUP in a joint statement**. “There is no reason for people to be incarcerated while they fight their deportation case, especially as ICE facilities throughout the country continue to detain people in dangerous and often deadly conditions. We demand that ICE not only end its transfer practice, but also use its discretionary authority to release people who are detained at Essex County Jail and all other facilities in the New York City region, rather than transfer them away from their families, counsel and communities.”

Background

The transfer concerns were first raised with ICE in [correspondence](#) issued June 4, 2021. ICE has yet to reply.

As the letter detailed, in many cases, detained individuals seemed to have simply disappeared - often to facilities in Louisiana, Alabama, and Pennsylvania - 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 misleading 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 even to 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.

As of June 25, 2021, [at least 22 NYIFUP clients had been abruptly transferred](#). The individuals currently detained at Essex and facing the prospect of imminent transfer are not represented by NYIFUP but by other locally-based direct legal service providers.

Earlier this morning, the Abolish ICE NY-NJ Coalition started a rally outside Essex County Correctional Facility in solidarity with the people in ICE’s custody - many of whom are on a foodstrike, according to their advocates -

and demanding that ICE end its transfer practice and release all those detained at facilities in New York and New Jersey. For more information on this action, please reach out to the below contacts:

Jeff Migliozi, jmigliozi@freedomforimmigrants.org, Freedom for Immigrants
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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 Varick Street Immigration.