

Human Rights Group Criticises Alleged Mistreatment at Florida ICE Detention Facilities

July 24, 2025

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A new report from Human Rights Watch (HRW) has raised serious concerns about conditions within three Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centres in Florida, alleging harsh treatment and substandard living conditions for detainees. Based on dozens of interviews with former detainees, family members, and legal professionals, the

report outlines accusations of unsanitary environments, medical neglect, and punitive practices that some say border on inhumane.

The 92-page report details findings from interviews with 11 individuals either currently or recently detained at the Krome North Service Processing Centre, the Broward Transitional Centre, and the Federal Detention Centre in Miami. HRW, a nongovernmental organisation that monitors global human rights violations, also spoke with 14 immigration attorneys and family members of seven detainees. The report accuses ICE personnel of treating detainees in a manner that allegedly violates international human rights standards.

One woman detained at Krome described being confined with dozens of others in a cramped cell with a single toilet that was reportedly unusable due to filth. “We begged the officers to let us clean it,” she told HRW, “but they just said sarcastically, ‘Housekeeping will come soon.’ No one ever came.” Other detainees described being shackled on long bus rides without food or water, with only limited access to restrooms. A male detainee recalled, “Because we were on the bus for so long, and we were not permitted to leave it, others defecated in the toilet... The whole bus smelled strongly of faeces.”

At Krome, detainees also reported being held in processing cells known as la hielera, Spanish for “the icebox,” which are so cold that individuals claim they could not sleep. “You could not fall asleep because it was so cold. I thought I was going to experience hypothermia,” said a 27-year-old Honduran man. Women held in these areas also claimed they were forced to use restrooms in the presence of male detainees and lacked proper medical attention.

Men detained at the Federal Detention Center alleged being mocked by guards, denied necessary medications, and subjected to invasive body searches following visits. One detainee told HRW that he was forced to strip naked, bend over, and cough in front of a guard without any legitimate cause. Others described eating while shackled, unable to reach their food with their hands, and having to eat from chairs using only their mouths.

Mental health care was another key concern raised in the report. Detainees at the Broward Transitional Centre claimed that those who showed emotional distress were placed in solitary confinement rather than offered treatment. “If you ask for help, they isolate you. If you cry, they might take you away for two weeks,” one woman told HRW. The center was also criticized for frequent lockdowns that reportedly restricted access to medical services and cut off outside communication, further impacting detainees’ psychological well-being.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has dismissed the report's claims. Tricia McLaughlin, Assistant Secretary at DHS, responded in a statement that, "Any claim that there are subprime conditions at ICE detention centers is FALSE. All detainees are provided with proper meals, medical treatment, and opportunities to communicate with their family members and lawyers." She emphasized that ICE detention standards are stricter than those in many facilities housing American citizens.

Addressing specific claims about female detainees at Krome, McLaughlin clarified that women are not placed in the general population and are separated from male detainees. She maintained that all detainees have access to appropriate medical services and humane treatment while in custody.

While the HRW report paints a bleak picture of life inside certain ICE facilities, federal officials continue to defend their protocols, insisting that detainee welfare remains a top priority. The ongoing disparity between reported conditions and government assurances reflects a broader debate over immigration enforcement practices and institutional accountability in the United States.