

Detention of Asylum Seekers in Georgia

In August 2016 Human Rights First visited the Irwin County Detention Center and the Stewart Detention Center in southern Georgia. The Stewart Detention Center, operated by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), is the largest immigration detention center in the United States for adults, with capacity to hold approximately 2,100 people in the custody of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The Irwin County Detention Center is operated by the LaSalle Corrections company.

Over the course of fiscal year 2015 more than 14,000 immigrants were detained at Stewart and Irwin combined. Many of them were seeking asylum or other forms of international protection. The number of asylum seekers detained in Georgia appears to have increased, even in recent months. An attorney at a local legal service organization stated, “Stewart is now, I would say, a detention center for asylum seekers.”

Human Rights First researchers met with 77 men and women detained at the two facilities, the majority of whom were seeking asylum, as well as a number of representatives from local legal and social service organizations. As outlined below, Human Rights First found that:

- Asylum seekers and other immigrants are held in these detention facilities for long periods of time. Some we met had been detained for eight months.
- Despite ICE’s national directive outlining the parole criteria for asylum seekers, there appeared to be a near moratorium on parole for asylum seekers at these facilities.
- Indigent asylum seekers and immigrants are routinely asked to pay bond amounts—a monetary condition of release—which they cannot afford, while those categorized as

“arriving” aliens are denied access to immigration court custody (bond) hearings altogether.

- Access to counsel at these facilities is disturbingly low—data show that only six percent of individuals detained at Stewart obtain counsel—and only a few of the 77 men and women we met with had legal counsel. Only one had a lawyer in Georgia.
- Many asylum seekers and immigrants expressed concern at prolonged separation from family due to both lengthy detentions and, in many cases, separation from family by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) or ICE.
- Lack of counsel, lack of parole, unduly high bonds, and the exceedingly high asylum denial rates at these facilities—nearly double the national average—thwart access to asylum. Many face the unbearable choice of long-term detention or accepting a deportation order to a country where they fear persecution.

While immigration detention often triggers human rights and access to counsel concerns, the men and women detained at these Georgia facilities have been subjected to a barrage of challenges and fundamental unfairness that defy U.S. human rights obligations, U.S. commitments under the Refugee Protocol, and the intent of U.S. law to allow refugees to apply for—and receive when eligible— asylum in the United States.

The individuals we interviewed shared their perceptions that securing release from detention or an asylum grant would be essentially impossible in Georgia, whether or not they had a strong case for asylum or other relief.

One asylum seeker from Guinea described his anguish at the thought of long-term detention after seeing many others remain in detention for upwards of a year, even though they seemed to meet the criteria for parole. He stated, “I am afraid to be here for [...] months. There are

people who have done everything they have been told by ICE, but they are all still here, some for over a year.”

Another man who had been detained for nearly three months reported that he had withdrawn his asylum application and agreed to accept deportation, despite fearing for his life in his home country. He feared that even if he won his asylum case, he would not be free, given the treatment of others at the detention center, “There were two Africans who won their cases; they stayed in detention.”

One African asylum seeker described the desperation that he and many others feel, stating: “You’d rather go back and die with your family than to stay and die here.”

Human Rights First urges the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ICE, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to take immediate steps to address the problems identified in this report. These recommendations are outlined at the end of this paper. In addition, Human Rights First has detailed broader recommendations for U.S. detention reform in prior reports and papers, including in its July 2016 report, *Lifeline on Lockdown: Increased U.S. Detention of Asylum Seekers*.¹

Arriving Asylum Seekers Are Denied Parole Despite Meeting Criteria for Release

In 2009, DHS issued a directive entitled, “Parole of Arriving Aliens Found to Have a Credible Fear of Persecution or Torture.” The parole directive states that an arriving asylum seeker determined to have a credible fear of persecution should generally be paroled from detention if his or her “identity is sufficiently established, the alien poses neither a flight risk nor a danger to the community, and no additional factors weigh against release.”² (An “arriving” asylum seeker is an individual who arrives at a U.S. port-of-entry, such as an airport or official land crossing.³)

Of the 77 men and women we met with at Stewart and Irwin, many were arriving aliens and had passed their credible fear interviews. But the prospect of being released on parole appeared to be nearly impossible, given ICE’s failure to follow its own parole directive. For example:

- **ICE granted parole to zero arriving asylum seekers detained in Georgia in fiscal year 2015.** According to data from Syracuse University’s Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, no immigrant detained at Stewart Detention Center, Irwin County Detention Center, or the Atlanta Pretrial Detention Center was granted parole in FY 2015.⁴ ICE has not released data on detention and release rates for 2016, though local groups confirm that despite the noticeable increase in asylum seekers detained in Georgia, they rarely, if ever, see parole granted.
- **All arriving asylum seekers we met with who had been through or were in the midst of the parole process reported ICE officers told them that a valid passport was required for parole.** As U.S. and international standards have long recognized, refugees who have fled a country of persecution may fear approaching that country’s consulate to request a passport, and many refugees have no real options other than to flee and seek refuge without a valid passport.

The asylum parole directive states that when an asylum seeker “cannot reasonably provide valid government-issued evidence of identity (including because the alien does not wish to alert that government to his or her whereabouts),” the applicant may provide alternate forms of identification verification, including sworn third-party affidavits accompanied by valid identification documents of the affiants. Even when third-party affiants are unavailable, the parole directive allows ICE officers to evaluate identity based on credible statements by the asylum seeker.

ICE officials in Georgia appear to be ignoring the parole directive, instead requiring a valid passport in order to release asylum seekers on parole. As a result, many asylum seekers who should be eligible for release have been, and will be, held for many months or longer in these detention facilities.

- **Some arriving asylum seekers reported that they were not provided with a parole interview or a written notification of parole denial, as**

required by the parole directive. The asylum parole directive requires ICE officers to provide each asylum seeker determined to have credible fear with a “parole advisal and scheduling notification” form, informing the asylum seeker that she or he will be interviewed for parole consideration and the deadline for submitting documents supporting the parole request. Additionally, any asylum arriving seeker denied parole must be provided with written notification of the denial, including an explanation of why and information on how to request a redetermination of parole eligibility based on changed circumstances or additional evidence.

Several arriving asylum seekers we spoke with at the Stewart Detention Center said that they were never interviewed for parole. Some reported that ICE deportation officers only relayed verbally that parole was denied and never provided a written notification. Without the written notification it can be difficult or impossible for asylum seekers to contest the denial of their release.

- **Other arriving asylum seekers were denied parole despite significant community ties.** Under the parole directive, factors for considering whether an asylum seeker presents a flight risk include community and family ties. At a minimum, the asylum seeker must provide an address where he or she will be residing. In cases of doubt, ICE officers are instructed to consider whether setting a “reasonable bond” or requiring participation in an alternative-to-detention program “would provide reasonable assurances” that the asylum seeker will comply with immigration proceedings. Despite this clear guidance, some asylum seekers we spoke with in Georgia were denied parole based on a perceived flight risk even when they provided significant documentation from U.S. citizen community sponsors who maintained that they would provide the person with housing and ensure his or her appearance at future immigration hearings and appointments.

Asylum Seekers Report Prohibitively High Bonds, or Lack of Access to Court Review Altogether

Both ICE and the immigration courts often require monetary bond payments as a condition of release from detention. Bond payments are meant to secure an individual’s appearance at future hearings or appointments—not to keep more people in detention due to their economic circumstances. In practice, however, ICE and the immigration courts fail to consider individuals’ ability to pay, leaving those with fewer financial means locked up.

Many of the women and men we spoke with described their fear of not being able to secure release and pursue their cases in the community due to prohibitively high bonds. A group of six women recently detained at Irwin County told us their understanding that bond is generally set between \$14,000 to \$20,000—amounts that none of them would be capable of paying due to lack of financial resources. Similarly, men detained at Stewart Detention Center told us they also would be unable to pay bond amounts they heard were typically set at over \$10,000.

In a recent case, 19-year-old Yefri Sorto-Hernandez was detained by ICE officers while waiting for the school bus in Charlotte, North Carolina in January 2016. In June 2016, after six months in detention, an immigration judge at the Stewart Immigration court set Yafri’s bond at \$30,000, despite the fact that the 19-year-old student has family in the United States and no criminal record.⁵

Moreover, many of the asylum seekers we met from African countries expressed their bewilderment at not even being afforded a custody hearing—known as a “bond hearing”—before the immigration court. Under federal regulations, arriving asylum seekers sent to detention centers after requesting protection at formal border entry points or airports (known as “ports of entry”) are not provided prompt access to immigration court custody hearings. Immigration judges do review ICE custody decisions for other immigrants in detention who are not classified as “arriving aliens,” such as those who are encountered near the southern border between ports of entry. For arriving aliens, however, ICE effectively acts as both judge and jailer. If ICE denies parole, the decision cannot be appealed to a judge—even an immigration judge.

As a result many African asylum seekers, who often seek protection at official ports of entry (as do individuals of other nationalities), are denied the basic safeguard of an immigration court review of their continued detention. One man from West Africa stated, “The [others] who jumped the border, they got bond and they left. But all the Africans are still here.”

Many Asylum Seekers Are Detained for Months or Longer

Among the 77 men and women we spoke to at Stewart and Irwin, the length of stay in Georgia detention facilities ranged from just a few days to nearly a year. One asylum seeker, who had been detained for eight months already when we met him, told us that he had been granted asylum by an immigration judge two weeks before our visit. Yet, he had not yet been released. We later learned that he was released in late August.

As his ultimate asylum status vindicates, this refugee spent nearly nine months in detention needlessly. His parole application had been denied after he passed the credible fear screening, despite submitting significant documentation of his identity and community ties.

Most asylum seekers we met—including those who had been detained for months as well as those who had been sent to detention more recently—expressed a fear of long-term detention, having witnessed many other asylum seekers remain in detention for over a year. Local attorneys confirmed that long-term detention seems to be inevitable for asylum seekers who wish to fight their case.

One attorney remarked that in February they were seeing merits hearings scheduled for October. Overall, it did not appear unusual for asylum seekers to wait well over six months in detention to have an individual hearing.

The lack of release options and oppressive conditions of confinement lead some with viable asylum claims to give up and accept an order of removal. Others remain to fight their cases, but fear they will “go crazy” as they saw some of their fellow detainees after months or even years of confinement. Multiple reports by medical professionals document the impact of detention on the mental health of asylum seekers and other immigration detainees.⁶

Both the Stewart and Irwin facilities are run by private contractors and have conditions that are essentially identical to those used in criminal correctional facilities.⁷

As reports of long-term detention have increased, detention numbers overall have reached an all-time high under the Obama Administration. In recent months the detained population has remained near 37,000 to 38,000—at least a 35 percent increase since last spring, when the population was just over 27,000. Many, possibly even the majority, are asylum seekers.⁸

Immigrants Are Isolated from Legal Representation

Only six percent of immigrants detained at Stewart have legal counsel, according to a national study on access to counsel.⁹ Local organizations indicate that access to counsel at Irwin County Detention Center is equally low.

This is less than half the percentage of immigrants who have legal counsel in detention nationally—already a grim statistic at merely 14 percent. This indicates that detention in Georgia presents particularly severe access to counsel challenges.

The Irwin and Stewart facilities are both located in rural areas three hours from Atlanta where there are few immigration lawyers or law firms. Of the 77 men and women we met with, few had legal counsel and only one had a lawyer in Georgia. Among those who had obtained counsel—often through the help of family members—the lawyers were located in distant locations such as Florida, California, or Texas, making it challenging to have sufficient contact with their detained clients.

Release from detention and having legal counsel are the two most important factors that can predict an immigrant’s likelihood of obtaining asylum or other relief.¹⁰ A national study on access to counsel found that 69 percent of immigrants released from detention obtain counsel, compared to the 14 percent in detention have representation. The same study found that the immigrants with legal counsel were five-and-a-half times more likely to win their cases.

The Legal Orientation Program (LOP), which is funded by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), has a program set up at Stewart that is run by Catholic Charities Atlanta. While the LOP does not provide legal representation, it is a vital program for many immigrants in detention and often the only credible source of information about the process, including what to expect in immigration court and how to seek release from custody.

The LOP has also been proven to reduce detention times.¹¹ However, men we spoke with indicated they were rarely informed about LOP sessions by ICE or facility staff. Other men who had been able to attend the program reported that sessions were frequently interrupted or cut short by facility staff.

At Irwin, where there is no LOP provider, the women we met with were highly uninformed about the legal process. An effort is underway to establish an LOP program at Irwin—a much needed development. Though, as noted earlier, the provision of legal information is not a substitute for actual legal representation.

Even when immigrants have secured legal representation, access to counsel problems persist. Pro bono lawyers and local nonprofits representing and advocating on behalf of immigrants detained at the Stewart facility report multiple barriers to attorney-client communications erected or left unaddressed by ICE and CCA, contracted to operate the facility.

For example, in March 2016 the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and a coalition of legal experts and civil rights organizations reported numerous impediments facing pro bono attorneys when they attempt to meet with or communicate with their clients, including requiring attorneys to speak to their clients through a plexiglass screen using a telephone that often does not work, and delaying or denying attorney visits altogether.¹² ICE Detention Standards require that detained individuals be able “to communicate effectively” with their legal counsel, and legal visitations be allowed “seven days a week, including holidays, for a minimum of eight hours per day on regular business days, and a minimum of four hours per day on weekends and holidays.”¹³ On September 6, 2016 SPLC reported the installation of a videoconferencing system at Stewart to allow some detained immigrants to speak to their attorneys via video in prescheduled one-hour intervals.¹⁴

Immigrants are Separated from Family Members at the Border Prior to Detention in Georgia; Others Endure Long-Term Separation from Family Abroad

Family unity is a human right and a cornerstone of U.S. policy and international law.¹⁵ However, DHS and its sub-agencies, including CBP and ICE, regularly engage in or perpetuate the separation of family members when making detention decisions.

Some families arrive together and are separated by CBP upon apprehension or by ICE upon placement in different ICE detention facilities. In other cases, ICE separates parents or other primary caretakers from their children who live in the United States through raids and other types of enforcement actions.

Family separation can have negative consequences on family members' ability to pursue their asylum claims. Barriers to communication created by detention make it more difficult for family members to work with the same legal counsel in preparing their cases. If hearings are scheduled at different courts, detained family members may not be able to consolidate their cases with others who are not in detention, hindering their ability to present the best testimony and evidence to support their cases, as family members are often each other's witnesses when they are fleeing the same or similar persecution.¹⁶

Moreover, the negative impacts of separation from primary caregivers on children are well-documented in medical and psychological research, and some children may end up in kinship or foster care, or even homeless, as a result of their parent's detention.¹⁷

Several of the men and women we met during our visits to Stewart and Irwin reported various accounts of family separation. For example:

- **U.S. immigration authorities separated a grandmother who is detained at the Irwin County facility from her two grandchildren, ages three and five.** The only adult traveling with the two small children, the grandmother, was separated from the children and detained after requesting asylum at a port-of-entry at the southern border. The two children were held in

Office of Refugee Resettlement custody for several weeks.

- **CBP separated a young woman detained at Irwin from her mother and younger siblings, who were detained in Texas.** This young woman described arriving at the border with her family to seek protection and being quickly separated from her mother and minor siblings. The mother and siblings were held in a family detention center in Texas prior to being released. Despite fleeing with her family, this young woman will have to fight her asylum claim alone in the Atlanta immigration court, where denial rates are over 98 percent. Her mother and siblings will have better access to legal assistance out of detention, meaning a greater chance of success on the merits.
- **A mother detained at Irwin had been separated from her 10-month old baby for nearly two months.** When this mother was detained as part of an ICE enforcement raid, she was the primary and sole caregiver of an infant. As a single mother she had no choice but to leave the baby in the care of the baby's grandmother. At the time Human Rights First met with her she did not expect to have her bond hearing for an additional two months, meaning she would be separated from her infant for at least four months. While ICE officers are required to consider whether an individual subject to an enforcement action is a primary caregiver and make placement decisions accordingly (e.g., by placing the parent in a detention facility within the ICE "area of responsibility" where the child resides) pursuant to the Facilitating Parental Interests in the Course of Civil Immigration Enforcement Activities Directive (parental interests directive), it is not required to release parents of children residing in the United States.

In addition, detention greatly prolongs family separation for those whose families remain waiting abroad, often in difficult and dangerous situations in countries plagued by conflict, persecution, and human rights abuses. Communication from detention centers is highly limited, with exorbitantly high phone card fees¹⁸, cutting some parents off entirely from their children's day-to-day lives,

which can be particularly threatening for children who remain abroad in the home country or a country of transit. Several of the men and women we spoke with at Georgia detention centers described their anguish over being separated from their children—including children who lived in the United States as well as children who remained abroad.

- **An asylum seeker from Guinea feared for the lives of his wife and young child, whom he had left behind in danger in order to seek protection.** Like many asylum seekers, this man was forced to flee first, with the hopes of securing protection in the United States and then bringing his family to join him in safety afterwards. But detention has prevented him from communicating with his family and others to arrange for their temporary safety. As he stated, "Your children don't eat. You are tortured by that. They don't go to school [due to their fear of being killed]."

Recommendations

- DHS and ICE should clarify in writing to the Atlanta ICE field office (as well as all other ICE field offices) that the 2009 directive—*Parole of Arriving Aliens Found to Have a Credible Fear of Persecution or Torture*—remains in full force and must be followed, including in the wake of DHS Secretary Johnson's 2014 enforcement priorities memorandum. Given the pattern of inconsistent application of parole policies for over 20 years, DHS and the DOJ should codify the core requirements of the parole directive into regulations.
- DHS and ICE headquarters should conduct additional oversight of ICE operations in Georgia where parole grants have been abysmally low despite having a high number of asylum seekers in detention, and should review all cases at these facilities for release eligibility. The agencies should stop using these remote facilities, particularly in light of the extraordinary lack of counsel, failure to follow the parole directive, exceedingly low asylum grant rates, and the penal nature of the conditions at these facilities.
- The EOIR and DHS should instruct immigration judges and ICE officers, respectively, to consider

ability to pay in cases where bond is required for release, and DOJ and EOIR must take steps to address the exceedingly high denial rates in asylum and other cases.

- Congress and DHS should end its over-reliance on private and other immigration detention and instead implement community-based alternatives to detention, ensure full access to counsel, and provide universal LOP in ICE detention, as well as institute a LOP at the border in facilities holding those in CBP custody. Human Rights First commends the efforts to institute an LOP at Irwin County and recommends that EOIR and ICE move forward with implementation of the program as quickly as possible.
- DHS should appoint a high-level position to oversee department-wide efforts to ensure family unity and end needless practices of separating families in custodial decisions. CBP should begin by consulting with the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to implement a parental interests directive. ICE should improve its implementation of the ICE parental interests directive and implement a policy of issuing a Notice to Appear (NTA) to families who arrive at the border seeking protection, allowing family members to pursue their immigration court removal cases together in the community. ■

Endnotes

1 See Human Rights First, “Lifeline on Lockdown: Increase in U.S. Detention of Asylum Seekers,” August 26, 2016; See also Human Rights First, “Family Detention: Still Happening Still Damaging,” October 20, 2016; See also Human Rights First, “How to Repair the U.S. Immigration Detention System: Blueprint for the Next Administration,” December 2012; See also Human Rights First, “Jails and Jumpsuits: Transforming the U.S. Immigration Detention System – A Two-Year Review,” 2011.

2 ICE Policy Directive No. 11002.1, “Parole of Arriving Aliens Found to Have a Credible Fear of Persecution or Torture,” (Dec. 8, 2009).

3 8 C.F.R. 1001.1(q) (“The term arriving alien means an applicant for admission coming or attempting to come into the United States at a port-of-entry, or an alien seeking transit through the United States at a port-of-entry, or an alien interdicted in international or United States waters and brought into the United States by any means, whether or not to a designated port-of-entry, and regardless of the means of transport.”)

4 See Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University, “Detainees Leaving ICE Detention from Irwin County Detention Center,” available at <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/detention/201509/IRWINGA/exit/>; see also, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University, “Detainees Leaving ICE Detention from Stewart Detention Center,” available at <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/detention/201509/STWRTGA/exit/>; A recent analysis by the Southern Poverty Law Center of ICE data from Oct. 1, 2014 to July 31, 2015, confirmed zero parole grants at Stewart Detention Center and parole grants in 0.2 percent of cases at Irwin County Detention Center. See SPLC, “Immigrants detained in Georgia more likely to be deported than detainees elsewhere,” Aug. 23, 2016, available at <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2016/08/23/immigrant-detainees-georgia-more-likely-be-deported-detainees-elsewhere>.

5 Mark Price, “After six months in custody, bond was set for immigrant CMS student,” *The Charlotte Observer*, June 28, 2016.

6 See Physicians for Human Rights and the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture, *From Persecution to Prison: The Health Consequences of Detention for Asylum Seekers* (June 2003); Rachel Kronick and Cecile Rousseau, “Asylum-Seeking Children’s Experiences of Detention in Canada: A Qualitative Study,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 85, No. 3, 287-294 (2015); see also A. S. Keller, et al, *The Mental Health of Detained Asylum Seekers*, 362 *The Lancet* 1721 (2003); United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Report on Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal: Volume 1: Findings and Recommendations* (February 2005), p. 197-198.

7 For instance, asylum seekers and immigration detainees are required to wear prison uniforms, are held in large rooms with many other detainees for 23 hours a day, and experience other

restrictions that are essentially identical to criminal correctional detention. See also Human Rights First, "Jails and Jumpsuits: Transforming the U.S Immigration Detention System – A Two-Year Review," 2011.

8 Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil, "Jails serve inmates and immigrants," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 2016; DHS Appropriations Bill, 2016, June 18, 2015, Report 114-68, *available at* <https://www.congress.gov/114/crpt/srpt68/CRPT-114srpt68.pdf>.

9 Ingrid Eagly and Steven Shafer, *A National Study of Access to Counsel in Immigration Court*, University of Penn L R (2015) Vol 164 No 1.

10 The Katzmman Immigrant Representation Study Group and the Vera Institute of Justice, "The New York Immigrant Representation Study: Preliminary Findings (New York: The Katzmman Immigrant Representation Study Group and the Vera Institute of Justice, May 2011)," *available at* <http://nylawyer.nylj.com/adgifs/decisions/050411immigrant.pdf>.

11 Nina Siulc, Zhifen Cheng, Arnold Son, Olga Byrne, *Legal Orientation Program: Evaluation and Performance and Outcome Measurement Report, Phase II*, Vera Institute of Justice (May 2008).

12 Rhonda Brownstein, "The Corrections Corporation of America is Blocking Immigrants from Seeing Their Lawyers at a Georgia Detention Center," *The Huffington Post Blog*, July 5, 2016; see also SPLC Letter to ICE and CCA Officials Re: Attorney Access to Detained Clients at Stewart Detention Center, March 21, 2016, *available at* https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/final_version-letter_re_access_to_counsel-stewart_detention_center.pdf.

13 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "2011 Operations Manual ICE Performance-Based National Detention Standards," Sec. 5.7 (V)(J)(2) and Sec. 5.6.

14 SPLC, "Immigrants Detained in Georgia to Get Better Access to Counsel After SPLC Complaint," September 6, 2016.

15 Final Act of the 1951 U. N. Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status Of Refugees and Stateless Persons, Recommendation B.; U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 23, (March 23, 1976); U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 9, (September 2, 1990); General Comment 6 to the Convention, "Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin" (CRC 2005).

16 Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, *Background – Separation of Immigrant Families in U.S. Immigration Custody*, *available at* <http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Family-Separation-FINAL-background-3-22-16.pdf>.

17 See e.g.; Randy Capps, et al, *Implications of Immigration Enforcement Activities for the Well-Being of Children in Immigrant Families: A Review of the Literature*, Migration Policy Institute, September 2015.

18 In June 2016, ICE reached a settlement in a lawsuit brought by the ACLU aimed at challenging the prohibitively high cost of

phone calls for immigrants detained in Northern California, where detainees were charged a \$5.50 connection fee even when the call was dropped or improperly connected. ICE agreed to provide free calls to pro bono immigration attorneys, install new phone booths, allow legal calls to family, friends, and others to obtain information for immigration cases, and offer phone credit to those unable to pay for calls, among other measures. See ACLU, "Immigration Officials Agree to Give Immigrant Detainees Fighting Deportation Reliable Access to Phones," June 14, 2016.