

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 31, 2020

Cameron Quinn
Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave SE
Mail Stop #0190
Washington, DC 20528-0190

Dear Ms. Quinn,

We are writing to request that your office take up an investigation into allegations recently raised about the treatment of Muslim detainees at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility, Krome Service Processing Center, in Miami, Florida.

The allegations that Muslim detainees were given a “choice” to violate their religious tenets by eating pork, or offered spoiled halal food as a substitute, are outlined in detail in a letter sent to your office by Muslim Advocates on August 18th, 2020.¹ While ICE has publicly denied the allegations,² every aspect of the allegations has documented precedent. Given the history of religious freedom violations across ICE detention facilities, including violations affecting Muslim, Catholic, Jewish, and Hindu detainees³, we find the allegations of targeted violations of Muslim civil rights to be credible.

Furthermore, given a history of dangerously poor food quality in ICE detention facilities, including those enumerated in a February, 2019 DHS Office of the Inspector General report regarding the detention facility in Essex, New Jersey⁴, we find the allegation that the “reasonable accommodation” provided to detainees at Krome may have included spoiled religiously compliant food alternatives to be credible.

As you are no doubt aware, forcing Muslim detainees to choose between eating pork and eating spoiled halal food would be a clear violation of ICE’s 2011 *Performance-Based National Detention Standards*.⁵ They would also be clear violations of the civil rights and civil liberties of Muslim detainees.

¹ <https://muslimadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020.08.18-Krome-Letter-FINAL.pdf>

² <https://twitter.com/ICEgov/status/1296201062341369857?s=20>

³ <https://www.acslaw.org/expertforum/ice-contract-facilities-including-counties-continue-to-violate-the-religious-exercise-rights-of-muslim-detainees/>

⁴ <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-02/OIG-19-20-Feb19.pdf>

⁵ See <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-standards/2011/4-1.pdf> and <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-standards/2011/5-5.pdf>

We further note that Krome is not likely to be the only facility where these alleged violations are occurring. For this reason, we ask that your investigation include the specific allegations raised in Muslim Advocates' letter, be expanded to include investigations of other facilities with significant numbers of detainees requiring religious accommodations. We also request a list of those facilities, including the numbers of detainees requiring religious accommodations, disaggregated by religion, at each of them.

As part of this investigation, we ask that you specifically examine the grievance and complaint system at Krome and other facilities, given the allegation that detainees filed numerous grievances about the meal issue but never received a response. We ask that the results of this investigation be made public.

We also ask that you do everything in your office's power to ensure that all Muslim detainees and other detainees requiring religious dietary accommodations are given immediate access to those accommodations, and that ICE officers and employees who have violated detainees' rights are held accountable.

The fundamental values of religious freedom and equality before the law are essential to the fabric of our democracy. We demand accountability for this treatment, and we look forward to working with your office to achieve it.

Sincerely,



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress

Additional signers

Rep. Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Rep. Judy Chu
Rep. Jim Cooper
Rep. Madeleine Dean
Rep. Debbie Dingell
Rep. Ted Deutch
Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Sylvia R. Garcia
Rep. Jahana Hayes
Rep. Jared Huffman
Rep. Pramila Jayapal
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson
Rep. Marcy Kaptur
Rep. Rick Larsen

Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Jerrold Nadler
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton
Rep. Mark Pocan
Rep. Ayanna Pressley
Rep. Linda T. Sánchez
Rep. Jan Schakowsky
Rep. Albio Sires
Rep. Adam Smith
Rep. Juan Vargas
Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez
Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman

cc: The Hon. Joseph V. Cuffari, Homeland Security Inspector General