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Continued from A1

that a "significant number" of people remain imprisoned at Leavenworth despite having won their immigration cases, which often fall under civil law, not criminal. Some cannot return to their countries of origin because, upon return, they could face torture or violence.

While the possibility of securing release for people facing deportation is low, Sharma-Crawford said ensuring they are held within legal standards could be done.

Leavenworth, formerly the Fort Leavenworth Military Prison, is one of two facilities in the state currently used to detain immigrants.

In February, ICE and the Bureau of Prisons agreed to hold immigrants at Leavenworth. A separate facility in Leavenworth, a shuttered prison owned by private company CoreCivic, was planned to reopen and detain immigrants as well, but a judge blocked the company from doing so based on local zoning rules.

Sharma-Crawford said he has heard anecdotes about ICE officials in and

around Chicago driving across the region, including to Kansas and Missouri, frantically trying to find a place to hold people.

More than 1,300 men are typically held in the medium-security prison, and about 220 are held in a minimum security "satellite camp." At least 80 immigrants are being held at Leavenworth, according to the letter.

Randilee Giamusso, a spokeswoman for the prison bureau, declined to comment on the letter's claims but confirmed the bureau received the letter.

"The Federal Bureau of Prisons is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all inmates in our population, our staff, and the public. We have received the letter," Giamusso wrote in an email. "However, we do not comment on matters related to pending litigation, legal proceedings, or investigations."

Media officials at ICE did not respond to requests seeking a comment.

"Several immigrants" at Leavenworth experienced such a depression from extended lockdown periods, which often lasted 20 hours and sometimes as long as three days, that they attempted suicide, said the May 29 letter signed by a collection of eight civil rights organizations and

TUESDAY EVENING

attorney groups.

After their suicide attempts, they were reportedly put in solitary confinement.

'One detainee who witnessed a suicide attempt has felt depressed and fearful during subsequent lockdowns," the letter said, "but has been afraid to report his mental health symptoms to staff for fear that he, too, will be removed from the unit and will be placed in solitary confinement."

Another representative of the prison bureau declined to confirm or deny the letter's claims about suicide attempts in Leavenworth.

Karla Juarez, executive director of Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation, said in a news release that the conditions at Leavenworth are horrifying.

"What's happening at FCI Leavenworth is not only a violation of ICE's own policies — it's a violation of our shared humanity," she said. "These are people who have already won their immigration cases and who should be free with their families, not locked in overcrowded cells without access to medical care or even sunlight."

People serving sentences from criminal convictions at Leavenworth are able to use the prison's outdoor vard for

S=Spectrum W=WOW D=DirecTV DH=Dish

recreation and exercise. Those in ICE's custody are not, despite that being a condition of the two agencies' collaboration.

The agreement between the federal agencies said: "ICE detainees will have access to education and psychology materials, leisure and law libraries, and indoor and outdoor recreation.'

The letter concludes with a list of 14 recommendations. The foremost suggestion demands the release of all detained immigrants who have won their immigration cases. Others included providing free and timely medical care, interpretation services, free and private confidential calls with attorneys, access to a chaplain, free printing from the prison law library, recreational services, and outdoor time.

The letter was backed by Advocates for Immigrant Rights and Reconciliation; the American Civil Liberties Union; the ACLU of Kansas; the American Immigration Lawyers Association; the Missouri and Kansas chapter of the immigration lawyers association; the Federal Public Defenders for the District of Kansas; the National Immigrant Justice Center; and the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation through the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

JUNE 10, 2025



(913) 680-6200

GET IN. GET OUT. **GET WELL.**

3550 S 4th Street, #110 | Leavenworth, KS

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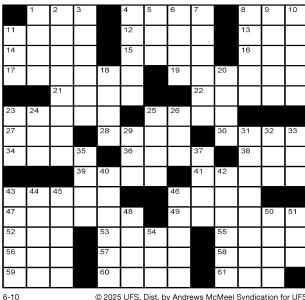
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