



August 26, 2020

The Honorable Joseph V. Cuffari
DHS Inspector General
Office of Inspector General/Mail Stop 0305
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Officer Cameron Quinn
Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Compliance Branch, Mail Stop #0190
2707 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20528-0190
Sent via

Dear Inspector General Cuffari and Officer Quinn:

We write to request that the Office of Inspector General immediately halt and investigate the use of force and solitary confinement against peaceful protesters at Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center (“Pine Prairie”), in Pine Prairie, Louisiana. Asylum seekers held by ICE have been peacefully protesting their indefinite and inhumane detention, the conditions of detention, and discriminatory treatment. Based on our interviews of eyewitnesses and victims, we believe that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) and its contractor, the Geo Group, responded with unlawful force, improperly interfered with protected speech, and continue to do so in the face of renewed protests. We especially want to highlight the violence against Cameroonian and other Black protesters, as they have led hunger strikes, and lifted their voices to join the call that “Black Lives ICE

that you conduct a
quickly as possible.

Cameroonian asylum-seekers
March of 2020 and was

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and conditions of confinement; blanket parole denials, particularly to Cameroonians and other Black applicants; across-the-board failure to respond to *pro se* parole applications; false promises and statements from ICE regarding the sincerity of their custody reviews; and the inhumanity of being imprisoned during a global pandemic. In response to their peaceful protest action of refusal to eat, officials responded by stating that the peaceful protesters were to be placed in what Pine Prairie calls “Echo” or “Seg,” which the ICE Performance Based National Detention standards calls “Special Management Units” or “SMU,” known more plainly as solitary confinement. Some of the strikers sat on the floor, others held their hands above their heads to show their peaceful intention. In retaliation, fifteen guards mobilized with tear gas cannisters, a tear gas gun, pepper spray, and handcuffs. Without any provt

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Indefinite Detention

The group of Black asylum-seekers currently on strike are being indefinitely detained by ICE at a rate much higher than other populations, a central reason for their protest against the stated racism inherent in the

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Freedom of Speech

Further, the First Amendment prohibits ICE from abridging freedom of speech.¹⁶ Insofar as ICE has prohibited outside communication

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In the name of integrity and accountability, we again urge you to investigate and remedy the above-detailed incidents of racism and violence against detained Black immigrants at Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center, and all incidents of violence which we, our partner organizations, and the press have identified by ICE against the human beings in its care here in Louisiana.

If the hunger strikers are not returned from Echo immediately, further action will be necessary.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Cameroon American Council
Freedom for Immigrants
ISLA: Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy
Southern Poverty Law Center

Cc

FOD Diane Witte
Interim Field Office Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
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New Orleans, LA 70113

Sent via email to: _____

Warden Eric Staiger
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Direct responses to:

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