

Urgent Human Rights Complaint Submitted After ICE “Disappears” 48 New Mexico Residents

Advocates Urge Legislators to Schedule and Pass HB 9 and SB 250 Before Legislative Session Ends

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SANTA FE, NM – At a press conference held at the State Capitol today, a coalition of immigrants' rights advocates announced the submission of a formal [complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security challenging the "disappearance" of 48 New Mexico residents. The coalition also called on New Mexico legislators to urgently advance two bills that would help protect immigrant New Mexicans: HB 9 (Immigrant Safety Act) and SB 250 (No State & Local Resources for Immigration Enforcement Act).

New Mexicans were apprehended by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) during operations last week in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Roswell. According to an ICE press release, the majority had no criminal record. The complaint submitted by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of New Mexico noted that ICE has not disclosed their identities, whereabouts, detention conditions, or whether they have access to legal counsel or are being afforded due process – effectively causing them to vanish from public knowledge.

"This is not just a procedural issue – it's a serious human rights violation," said **Rebecca Sheff**, **senior staff attorney at ACLU of New Mexico**. "When the government takes people into custody and then their whereabouts are unknown and they are unreachable, it places these individuals outside the protection of the law. Families are left in agonizing uncertainty, desperate to contact their loved ones and ensure their safety. Enforced disappearances are prohibited by both our Constitution and international human rights standards."

[HB 9](#) would close a dangerous loophole that allows ICE and private detention contractors to use local governments to bypass safety oversight. [SB 250](#) would establish a statewide policy that prevents state and local resources from being used to help enforce federal immigration laws.

Both bills must advance quickly through the legislative process before the session ends to provide critical protections for immigrant communities in New Mexico.

Marcela Díaz, executive director of Somos Un Pueblo Unido, emphasized the importance of passing SB 250. “We do not know if and how the federal government worked with local agencies to identify and locate these New Mexicans. When local agencies share data or proactively provide support to ICE for these operations, it undermines public safety and trust for everyone,” said Díaz. “Right now, 48 of our community members have been taken with no transparency or accountability. The Legislature still has time to make sure the state and its cities and counties are not complicit in these actions.”

Jessica Inez Martínez, director of policy and coalition building at the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, highlighted the urgency of passing HB 9. “New Mexicans are community-centered, fiercely protective of our people and want to ensure that our communities are safe. Since 2022, three people have died in custody at detention centers in our state. These facilities have long histories of human rights violations, including inadequate medical care. We have the power to protect immigrants in New Mexico and stop ICE from using our state as a laboratory for mistreatment. HB 9 is a critical bill that would prevent state and local governments from enabling this cruel system.”

“When I was detained, my family had no idea where I was for days,” said **Edwin Jesus Garcia Castillo, who was formerly detained at the Torrance County Detention Facility**. “That feeling of being erased from the world – it’s terrifying. These 48 people and their families are going through that right now. No one should face this kind of treatment in America.”

Norma Mendoza, community organizer at El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos, urged support for SB 250 and bold action to protect immigrant New Mexicans. “With the promise of mass deportation, raids in other states, and ICE reversing their commitment not to conduct enforcement in schools, hospitals, and churches, fear is at an all-time high. The recent detentions bring deafening silence—were they afforded due process? Were police involved like in my son’s case? Are they suffering the same deplorable conditions in a privatized detention center as he did? New Mexico has long recognized our communities’ economic, cultural, and civic contributions. We cannot allow what we have all built to be torn down.”

“The Trump administration continues to terrorize communities and immigrant families in New Mexico and across the country,” said **Zoe Bowman, supervising attorney at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center**. “Now more than ever, it’s crucial our state elected officials pass the Immigrant Safety Act and keep families together. Our state’s policies must protect our newest New Mexicans and welcome them with dignity, rather than detention or deportation.”

“What ICE has done is not just an attack on immigrant families, it’s an attack on the very idea of due process and human rights. When people are taken and disappeared, potentially without access to legal counsel or contact with their loved ones, it echoes some of the darkest chapters in history,” said **Ariel Prado, Director of Civil Engagement at Innovation Law Lab**. “New Mexican Legislators have a moral obligation to act now by passing HB 9 and SB 250. We

cannot allow our state to be complicit in the machinery of immigrant detention and deportation. The time to stand with our communities is now.”

The ACLU of New Mexico’s [complaint](#) requests that federal civil rights authorities immediately locate the individuals who were apprehended, ensure their well-being, protect them from retaliation, and hold accountable those responsible for their disappearance.