



**NJ Civil Rights Defense
Committee**
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Families for Freedom

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To: **Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement:** David Venturella (National Office), John Carbone, (Interim Field Office Director-NJ), Edward McElroy (Field Office Director-NY)
Hudson County Correctional Center: Warden Green, Officer Avilez, Acting Warden
Passaic County Correction Center: Sheriff Jerry Speziale, Warden Charles Myers

Civil and human rights organizations are alarmed at the number of incidents in the past two weeks at Hudson County jail against immigration inmates held on civil charges. We will illustrate the breadth of problems that immigration detainees face by reporting incidents bi-monthly from both Hudson County jail (considered one of the better facilities in NJ) and Passaic County jail (considered one of the worst). We seek public accountability from both the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and elected leaders to ensure immigration inmates' right to a safe and healthy environment.

Incidents at Hudson County jail

** On March 1st, 2004, at 5:30 pm at least three correctional officers Sergeant House, Officers Friday and Vargas severely physically assaulted two detainees. Reports were made to Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants, Families for Freedom, New Jersey Civil Rights Defense Committee and North Jersey ARA about the attack and the four groups collectively notified the American Civil Liberties Union-NJ and the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (legal counsel for one of the assaulted detainees, Sadek Awad). Officers reportedly repeatedly punched, kicked, and stomped an inmate in the face, back, shoulders, neck and groin, breaking three of his teeth. Another detainee was banged against the wall, punched and kicked in the ribs, face, back, and legs (which had just been operated on). Both of these unprovoked incidents took place in front of all the inmates in B 100 West. Both were initially denied proper medical care, and the first inmate was hurriedly transferred to Middlesex County jail, which denied his admittance and he was returned to Hudson. Both inmates have since been moved out of B 100 West and the guards that assaulted the detainees have also been moved out of the unit. "Today I bear witness to the worst physical abuse by correctional officers." stated one inmate witness who has been detained for two years. Several witnesses have come forward to give testimony. Internal Affairs and Immigrant Rights groups are presently conducting separate investigations.

**Weeks prior, an immigration inmate housed with a Federal inmate was charged with having contraband in his cell, despite assurances from the Federal inmate that the contraband was his. The immigration inmate was sentenced to 15 days in the "hole" (solitary confinement). The "contrabands" turned out to be vegetables.

Incidents at Passaic County Jail

**Over the past month an HIV positive immigration inmate has been receiving his medication on such an irregular basis that it renders the medication useless. The detainee has complained multiple times and asked for regular distribution of his medication but this has been denied.

**There has been an ongoing pink eye epidemic within the immigration detainee units over the past two months. One detainee's eyes became so swollen that he was unable to see. Initially the detainees with pink eye were given drops but this only lasted a brief time. For the last several weeks detainees have been reporting that they are receiving no medical treatment for the pink eye infections even after requesting medical assistance repeatedly. The extremely unsanitary conditions in the jail appear to be exacerbating the spread of infection.

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cc: Office of the Inspector General; James Gallagher, Passaic County Freeholder Director; Silverio A. Vega, Hudson County Freeholder Chairman; Officer Montanez, Hudson County Correctional Center Internal Affairs; Officer Nieves, Hudson County Correctional Center; American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey; American Friends Service Committee; Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund; Center for Constitutional Rights; Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants; Desis Rising Up and Moving; North Jersey ARA; Legal Aid Society of NY and NJ; Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; Associated Press, NY Times; NJ Herald News; NJ Star Ledger; NJ Jersey Journal