



**LEE &  
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LLP

Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

March 9, 2026

Dear Senators:

When an adult confines a child, denies them medical care, bars their access to education, and feeds them meals that contain dirt, worms and fingernails, the law rightly brands such person a criminal and strips them of custodial rights. How can it be, then, that when the United States government systematically inflicts these same outrages upon hundreds of children in its custody as a matter of official policy, the executive branch claims it is administering justice and enforcing acts of Congress?

The attached letters were written from ICE detention by the five children of the El Gamal family, aged 5, 5, 9, 16 and 18. For nine months, they have been detained with their mother in the Dilley, Texas child detention camp. This marks the longest faced by any family at Dilley since 2025, when the Trump administration reopened the facility that the Obama administration built in 2014.

This tragic fact lends unique weight to their testimony. The El Gamal children's letters establish (1) that the United States government is engaged in an effort to crush children's spirits and spoil their innocence and (2) that this is not the collateral consequence of indifference or lack of oversight, but the intended result of official White House policy to punish this family.

A healthier future society will note with bitter irony that the same government that wages war for "democracy" and "human rights" is detaining children at camps under color of law and signing contracts that incentivize for-profit corporations like CoreCivic and Target Hospitality to profit from their suffering. Future historians and ethicists will analyze how it was that government lawyers defended this system, how the courts allowed the abuse to continue, and how both parties in Congress funded this system for years with taxpayer money. But at present, the El Gamal family remains detained, marking birthdays, New Year's Day and Ramadan behind bars.

In less than four months, the United States will mark the bisesquicentennial anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. On July 4, the same government jailing hundreds of children for crossing a border will attempt to present itself as the progeny of the revolutionaries who produced the document that proclaimed, for the first time, that the people are entitled to “unalienable rights” like the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Frederick Douglass directed his 1852 speech “What to a Slave is the Fourth of July” at a political system which cynically celebrated the revolution while justifying chattel slavery, and his words are appropriate today:

“Had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, to day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.”

The El Gamal family has risked the only thing they have left—their family unity—to put these facts contained in these letters on the congressional record. The letters should startle the nation’s propriety and rouse its conscience. We urge the population to read them in full and to demand the El Gamal family’s release and the closure of Dilley.

Submitted,

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## Table of Contents

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Hayam El Gamal, mother.....       | 1  |
| Habiba El Gamal, 18-year-old..... | 12 |
| O.S., 16-year-old.....            | 34 |
| H.S., 9-year-old.....             | 53 |
| A.S., 5-year-old.....             | 55 |
| I.S., 5-year-old .....            | 56 |

The worst feeling on earth is to be oppressed and tormented while watching your children suffer from endless injustice right before your eyes, all while being completely powerless against this oppression. You are completely powerless because the people oppressing you have the authority and are twisting this truth under the name of the law.

My name is Hayam Elgamal, I am a mother who has been detained with my five children in the Dilley Detention Center since June 3, 2025. My children were aged 4 to 17 at the beginning of our detention; now they are 5 to 18. Unfortunately, we are still unjustly detained after more than nine months, and I don't know when this injustice will end. This injustice began on June 1 of last year, when I tried to call my husband, who had left for work the previous day, and was surprised to be answered by my eldest daughter, who was caring for her siblings at home.

My daughter told me to come home urgently, because she found her father's phone and wallet in our house while he was supposedly at work. When I arrived home, I was surrounded by police and FBI cars coming from every direction. They told me that they had nothing against me, but that I needed to go with them to the police station—a place I have never stepped foot in my entire life. When I asked what was happening, they said it concerned my husband. Worried, I asked if he had died in a car accident, since my husband used to say that he was always scared of driving after work because he would be exhausted and might get into an accident. The officer, however, told me that he was alive and being held in the Boulder police station. They told me I had to follow him to the station. I asked if my 16 year old son could come with me, and they agreed.

When we arrived at the police station, we were told to wait until the agents arrived. Worried and confused, my son tried to look up any news from the Colorado area. It was then that we learned the terrible truth and discovered the horror of what my husband had done.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing on the news. I can't describe how I felt in words. I was screaming and crying the whole time. I couldn't believe that my very quiet, calm, and passive husband could do this. It seemed impossible, but the impossible became reality for us. I couldn't believe the violence my husband used. Any use of violence is condemned by me, religiously and morally. I renounce and disagree with my husband's horrific actions. I condemn anyone who uses violence for any reason; violence is never acceptable. My heart goes out to all of the victims. No one should ever have to endure what they have endured.

I couldn't watch the videos. My brain couldn't comprehend what my eyes were seeing. I broke down in the police station and cried for several hours. He had just told me that he would go to work to make sure we have this month's rent, and that he would come back on Monday. He even promised to buy candy for the kids when he returned.

I couldn't stop crying during the four long hours of the FBI investigation. I didn't understand anything any longer. The FBI told me to pick up my kids and go to a hotel for the night while they searched the house. I picked up my kids in their pajamas, thinking I would return and get more clothes the next day, but little did I know that it was the last time we would see our house. I couldn't sleep that whole night, and I began to recall my entire story.

My story began 19 years ago, when I was 22. According to our religion and culture, I was supposed to be married by that age. So I entered an arranged marriage with a man I didn't know. I traveled with him to the country where I would later live for 17 years—17 years without ever breaking the law or . After marriage, I discovered that my husband was a man of very few words. He never shared his thoughts or feelings with me or his family. The things he wanted most were to be alone or to go to work.

After discovering the truth about him and how he really was, I thought about asking for divorce, but in our culture the wife is expected to become pregnant right after marriage or she would bring shame to herself and her family. So, after a month of marriage, when I was seriously considering divorce, I discovered I was already pregnant. I needed to raise my child in a normal family, with both a mother and a father figure. I continued in this unhappy marriage for the sake of my child, hoping I could change my husband or help him discuss his thoughts and feelings a little more. I thought I could encourage him to be involved and be a part of his child's life, but unfortunately I failed despite all my efforts. The only reply I ever received from him was, "I am fine, don't worry." I kept trying to involve him more in our lives, but with little success.

The struggle with my husband continued, however. I knew nothing about him. I wouldn't know when he was sick unless I accidentally found medicine he was taking, nor would I know about financial problems unless I discovered bank cards while looking for my kids' toys, revealing that he had taken loans behind my back.

Therefore I focused all of my effort on raising my beautiful children. I made that my job and responsibility. I taught my children to share their thoughts and feelings with me. I raised them to be good people and taught them to help others. I emphasized three things: to always have a positive impact wherever they go; to treat everyone with kindness and never judge people based on religion, race, or ethnicity; and to work hard and be the best at what they do. I succeeded. I raised five amazing kids who love and are loved by everyone around them.

Coming to the United States was a decision made solely by my husband despite my disagreement. Before our visitor visa finished he applied for asylum under personal circumstances. we remained in the country legally while our asylum application was pending, and we handed over our Social Security numbers, work permits, and driver's licenses.

Since arriving in the United States, my husband has had one responsibility which was to work and support the family financially. I have taken on all other responsibilities, from raising and caring for my kids to driving them to and from school, cooking, cleaning, and studying with them. Anything they needed was my job. He was the only source of income for seven people so he began working in Denver which is an hour and a half a way from home; he slept in his car to save money and returned home only one or two days a week, staying briefly to sleep and change clothes. During those days my kids and I tried to talk to him about how we were doing and how he was doing. He always answered, "I am fine". This has been our reality for the past three years, he supports the family financially, and I support my kids as they adjust to their new life.

It was hard for my children to adapt to the different culture and circumstances, especially because they didn't know any English and had no friends to help them. Nevertheless, we overcame our challenges and built beautiful relationships with everyone around us. All of my kids adapted and overcame their difficulties; they were loved by everyone they met, especially their teachers and classmates.

We tried to leave a positive impact on our community. my older children and I even volunteered to teach other immigrants English, and we participated in food drives.

My daughter finally graduated on May 2. After three years of hard work she graduated with honors and was chosen as one of the "Best and Brightest" students in the state, and took a picture with the mayor.

I was also applying for my EB 2 case, as I hold many certificates as a Network Engineering and was about to submit evidence for my petition to have a Green Card . Everything was going well.

What I didn't know was that, only two days later, my life would fall apart. On the morning of June 3, federal officers came to our hotel room, claiming we were not safe there and needed to be moved. We found ourselves in a cold cell, surrounded by a dozen officers. The agents then identified themselves, showed their badges, and seized all of our property. They told us they were ICE officers and that we would be transferred to a detention facility.

We had many questions, but the agents ignored everything we said. While we were waiting in the cell, I saw something that still haunts me and my kids will never forget. Four huge men grabbed a thin, skinny man, roughed him up, and threw him to the ground because he refused to give his fingerprints. The blows left him unable to walk properly, and they forced him to comply anyway. My children screamed in terror as they watched the assault, fearing the same thing might happen to us. When the officers called my name, I broke down in tears and, terrified of what might be done to me, complied with every demand they made.

After eight painfully long hours in that cell, we were moved again. This time we were taken to the airport, escorted by more than five people. I will never forget the moment we arrived. I had to wake my younger children from sleep because they were exhausted from moving all day, and it was 2 a.m. My kids were terrified by the sight of the gates.

Inside, more than a dozen officers told us to take showers and hand over all of our clothes. Confused, we obeyed as they gave us strange garments. I will never forget the look of fear and helplessness on my kids' faces. Until then we had no idea what was happening. We were afraid, nervous, and uncertain about what would come next.

When we reached our room, we were shocked. The room had two huge windows overlooking the hallway, so anyone passing by could see us. My nine year old daughter then asked if we were in prison. I said no; we hadn't done anything wrong. She began to cry and told me she was scared.

We tried to turn off the lights, but when we attempted to do so and go to sleep, an officer entered the room and turned the light back on. She said we were never allowed to turn the lights off. We asked if there was anywhere we could be covered, since my daughter and I could not be seen by the men passing by. She replied that she couldn't help us; they needed to watch us at all times. I wondered how we could survive in a place that does not respect privacy or religious rights. Our first night there was miserable. It wasn't enough that we had to keep our hijab on all day. Even at night we tried to close the curtains slightly so we could breathe and sleep normally, but the officer entered and aggressively pulled the curtains back.

A man walked into my room while I was sleeping, even though I had explained that I could not be seen by men. Moreover, they gave my daughter sweaters in the very hot Texas summer. My daughter needs to cover her body, and I have repeatedly asked supervisors for lightweight clothing, but they did not care; consequently my daughter wore sweaters throughout the summer. The mistreatment continued throughout our stay.

I tried to mail my car keys to a friend so he could pick up the car from the hotel parking lot where the federal agents had left it. I was told to go to a supervisor who was supposed to help. When I explained the urgency—my car would be towed if my friend could not move it—the supervisor said, “Be patient. You need to learn how to be patient here.” I reiterated the importance of the issue, but she looked at me disgustedly and said, “I don’t think you understand where you are. Someone needs to pay the consequences.” I responded that I hadn’t done anything wrong and began to cry. That moment made me realize the true reality of where I was and how people here treat others.

Even obtaining food was a struggle .When we went to the cafeteria, we repeatedly explained that we are Muslim and need halal food. All we were told was, “This is all we have, ma’am.” I ate food contrary to my religion for months until, after many complaints, halal food was finally provided. Even now the food is repetitive and processed; it is unhealthy for any growing child. My child skips many meals throughout the day and eats only the food I purchase from the commissary, which is also of poor quality. The commissary sells cheap, off brand snacks at higher prices. The only affordable, edible item is cup noodles, which many people rely on because they cannot tolerate the same greasy, low quality food over and over. There is nothing fresh or healthy for kids. My son dreams of eating a banana,

The food provided is the same low quality food we have been eating for nine months . We desperately want normal, human food.

Medical treatment is probably the biggest issue in this place. The medical department is underdeveloped and very basic; it does not meet any of the health needs people have. The medical administrator and most providers are among the meanest, unkindest, and rudest people you could ever meet. They keep you in a loop, doing nothing except prescribing ibuprofen for everything. You can wait over two hours just to see a nurse who gives you only ibuprofen and tells you to stop complaining and endure the pain.

My son suffered from appendicitis. He was crying and screaming in pain, yet the nurse looked at him coldly and said, "I can't help you now; come back in three days if the pain persists." I begged for help, but she sent us to the waiting area. No one cared about my son's condition until he was on his hands and knees, vomiting in the waiting room and screaming from the pain.

For the past two months I have had spot appearing on my face and body. The doctor believed it might be stress related and he gave me a temporary treatment to use until I could be referred to a dermatologist, but the treatment was delayed by two weeks because it was unavailable. Despite this, the medical department falsified my records, stating that I refused treatment—even though the medication was never approved and never arrived at the center. I have written documentation of all of this, including the physician's note from February 2 confirming that the treatment was not in stock. Yet on that same day they recorded in my medical reports that I refused to continue my treatment. Two months ago he referred me to an off site dermatologist, and since then nothing has happened. I have repeatedly requested a referral and reported the spread of my illness, but to no avail. I am still suffering and waiting.

My doctor referral and appointment under their mercy but they don't have mercy. If the Medical administrator was sick her self she would have made sure to get a near appointment urgently. But for me she reserve me appointment after 5 months. Although she knew my sickness is increasing so fast.

Also I have a weird bump under my rib cage. When I had it checked, I was given ibuprofen. Later, after my pain increased, I asked to see a provider again. I explained that my family has a history of cancer and that I need to know what this bump is and why it hurts, so I can intervene before it worsens. The provider ordered an X ray, although another provider told me X rays would not show anything. It turned out not to be a bone; the doctor said I needed a CT scan and promised to refer me. Two days later, when I checked on the referral, another provider told me the referral had not been made and prescribed even stronger painkillers. I explained that the doctor had written a referral, but the nurse said otherwise. I asked to speak with the doctor and was denied. I feel helpless and frustrated, taking steroids for my pain without knowing what is truly wrong with my body.

My five year old daughter has thirteen cavities. She was scheduled for surgery to treat the cavities before our detention, and the dentist knew about them since November 13 of last year, yet he took no steps to treat her. No one cared until I brought her in myself. Afterwards she began experiencing pain in multiple teeth because the cavities were worsening. The dentist only prescribed ibuprofen. I told him I was scared the cavities would require root canals if left untreated, but he said he would try to treat them at the facility, even though the facility has no means to treat children's dental pain. After failing to treat her, he referred her to an orthodontist, but the medical department pressured him, saying she did not need a referral and could be treated there. How can they expect a five year old child to endure that pain? Even external dentists told me it was impossible, which is why my daughter was scheduled to have all her cavities treated together under anesthesia. To this day my daughter still has thirteen worsening cavities, and no one has taken responsibility to treat them.

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I was told to file a grievance if I ever had any issues, believing someone would investigate. Unfortunately, I was wrong. Everyone who works here covers up and lies for each other. Every grievance I have submitted has been returned with the status "Unfounded." They simply make issue doesn't exist, and they claim this place is great; then they close the grievance. Their facility did a really good job picking its people. The staff here are almost as hostile as the place itself. Nearly 50 % of the officers don't care about anyone; about 40 % of them even actively work to make our lives more miserable. They eat lollipops and pizza in front of the kids and don't care about the tears and looks on the children's faces as they watch.

I once went to the medical office with my children, and the officer at the desk was eating a banana in front of my son. He cried so much and told me he wanted a banana too, but all the officers, instead of apologizing and offering one, said they were busy. I tried so hard that day to hide, and I have never felt so helpless in my life. I survive in this terrible place; you might be able to stay for 20 days, or maybe a month, but after that it becomes impossible. This place isn't prepared for longer stays. It doesn't have a school for the children. My kids haven't gone to school for months and have missed their entire school year. They will have to repeat the year.

DHS and ICE don't care about the children's welfare and development. They lie and say there is a school here. I decided to try it, and it was even worse than I expected. My nine-year-old daughter was learning the names of fruits for science; she is in fourth grade. When I asked the teacher about her level, she told me this was a program, not a school. I even suggested that she print some worksheets for my daughter's level so I could work on them together, but she refused, I told her my kids would fall behind in their mental growth compared with other children but she don't care. This place has destroyed my children, both physically and mentally.

My five-year-old son, who was potty-trained and had never wet himself since he was three, has started wetting himself at night for the first time in months. His twin sister wakes up almost three times a night, screaming and crying because she keeps having the same nightmare—she feels she is being chased by something but can't escape because of the fence and the locked gates.

My 9-year-old daughter, the one who was bright and amazing, the one who loved math and school and was loved by everyone, now says, "I hate my life." She asks me, "What did I do to have to stay here? Why can't we leave like all my friends did?" Everyone left except us; they are all so lucky. I feel heart-broken when I look at her. Of all my kids, this place has had the worst effect on her. Lately she has even wet herself at night she wakes up crying—which literally shatters me. All the stress and depression I've been living with are affecting my physical and mental health.

Furthermore, my eldest daughter was separated from me after she spoke to some media outlets about this place. They took her away from me and placed her in a separate section. This is the first time we have ever been separated. I couldn't help my daughter as they removed her; she looked at me for help. I cried and told her I was sorry—sorry for not being able to protect her. That feeling of powerlessness is the worst feeling ever. They promised I would see her every day, but the next day they told me I would only see her one day per week . When I asked the same person who had promised daily visits, she claimed she never said that and called it a "miscommunication." You can't trust anyone here; they lie and change what they say moments after talking to you. I had to beg everyone here and ask my lawyer to intervene just to see my daughter an hour a day.

While fighting all of these battles alone and trying to survive this place, I was also fighting the biggest fight of all: the fight to get out. The fight against the oppression and injustice caused by DHS and ICE, who choose to let us suffer in detention. My EB-2 case was rejected for no reason—just because of my relationship to my husband—even though I was very close to receiving a green card. I still remember the first day our lawyer told us we would be applying for bond; that was back in June of last year. Nine months later I'm still hearing the same terms, without any resolution.

DHS has decided to unjustly detain us indefinitely without evidence, and ICE follows suit. Their strategy is to keep people in detention as long as possible so they eventually voluntarily depart. Our battle with them is far more complicated.

From June until September 12, we tried to collect evidence of our innocence and lack of knowledge about my husband's actions. We obtained a special FBI agent's statement confirming we had no idea and weren't involved in his plans. We secured an amazing sponsor willing to help us, and a supportive community ready to welcome us upon release—but it wasn't enough for DHS. They insisted we couldn't be released. After the judge reviewed the evidence, he ruled in our favor and granted bond. We were ecstatic; we thought it was the end after three long months of waiting.

Little did we know that, The DHS will twist the truth in the name of the law, which mean that we have no chance of winning. DHS appealed the decision and issued an automatic stay on the judge's order, preventing our release for months. We then had to go to federal court to fight the stay and wait even longer. After months, we won in federal court and were set to be released by December 12. However, DHS issued a discretionary stay, meaning indefinite detention. Every brief moment of hope was taken away. They act under the name of the law yet unfairly detain a 5-year-old for more than nine months. Our injustice continued at the asylum hearing. Our lawyer withdrew a week before the final hearing due to health issues. She notified the court and arranged a law clinic to help us two weeks after the hearing date. We attended the hearing alone and asked the judge for two weeks to obtain new counsel. She refused and forced us to represent ourselves. I pleaded, "I know nothing about immigration or the courts; I need an attorney." I made it clear I was not waiving my right to counsel, but she ignored me and proceeded. DHS refused voluntary departure and invoked a terrorism bar against us. The judge pushed us through the hearing despite our requests. She read our asylum applications, then denied the case because some sub-questions were unanswered, claiming we "abandoned" our applications. Consequently, we were deported back to Egypt.

This pattern isn't unique. Almost every family detained here receives a negative outcome. Some families were rejected in USCIS interviews, and when they appeared before a judge, the judges didn't even listen to their testimony or concerns about interpreters—they simply trusted the interpreters and USCIS staff.

After several months, the BIA issued its decision on the DHS appeal (December 15). It remanded the bond hearing, and during that hearing DHS delayed the process until January 21 by requesting three additional hearing dates and asking irrelevant questions. She again insisted we fell under the terrorism bar and were a flight risk despite our community's press conference two days before the hearing, where American citizens publicly supported our release. DHS argued we were a flight risk because of a pending deportation order we were appealing, even though DHS and ICE have released more than 10 families I personally know, all under appeal. Yet the judge sided with DHS and issued an unfair decision. Now we remain stuck in detention with no end in sight.

We were devastated. My 16-year-old son began crying—a rarity for him. He is depressed and stays locked in his room since all his friends were released. My 9-year-old daughter now wets her bed frequently and constantly says, "I hate my life." My eldest daughter struggles alone, separated from me and her siblings during the most difficult time of her life especially in Ramadan month which we have to be more closer to God and become more attached to our faithmy daughter not with us. She was betrayed by her father and then torn from her family. My younger children refuse to eat, cry at night, and miss school, friends, and their older sister away. I don't know what to tell them.

Meanwhile, I am heart-broken and devastated by the injustice inflicted on my children, and my own mental and physical health is rapidly deteriorating. My body is screaming for relief, but no one seems to care.

On February 19, the DHS attorney who opposed us visited the facility. I coincidentally ran into her and begged her to stop detaining us unfairly. I explained my situation, showed her my kids, and said I understood she was "doing her job," but asked for proof that we knew about my husband's plans or that we were a flight risk. She was speechless. I asked why DHS didn't investigate with us as the FBI did if they wanted the truth. She said nothing. I told her she was destroying our lives, yet I still have faith in the justice system and believe the truth will prevail—but when? I am exhausted, and so are my kids. I begged her to stop this oppression and injustice for our health and well-being. Yet here we are, still suffering.

What I am sharing is my personal experience—still ongoing and still oppressive. My goal is to shed light on the real injustice taking place under the name of the law, which many people don't know about. This experience has changed us profoundly. My eldest son and my 5-year-old daughter now want to become lawyers, while my 5-year-old son wants to become a judge so he can release us and all his friends. Knowing the darkness and truth of this place, they want to help others avoid what we are enduring. We kindly ask you to ensure justice is served and that we are treated as free, innocent human beings.

Please, I urge you to grant us our freedom . I urge you to release all children and families who have done nothing wrong. I suggest that an investigations into Core Civic should be conducted.

They should be held to regular check-ins like unannounced inspections or requiring a medical reports signed by each resident, this way the truth is revealed and no one is detained has to suffer .

Hayam Elgamal  
03/08/2026

*Hayam Elgamal*

My name is Habiba Soliman. I'm eighteen years old and I have been detained in Dilley, Texas since June 2025 with my family.

Every morning we wake up wondering how much more of this we can take, because nine months in detention has felt like an eternity. We are being held not for something we did, but simply because we are related to someone who committed an awful and unforgivable act. An act we had absolutely no part in and one we fully condemn.

Imagine being punished for something you didn't do, something you would never support, and then being trapped in a detention for months. Imagine being forced to stay in a place where the food is barely edible, where officers treat you with coldness and disrespect, and where medical care is so neglected.

Then there is also the constant fear of not knowing what will happen next. The fear that we might stay here for months or even years without answers. The fear that we will simply be forgotten while our lives are being destroyed in this detention.

Despite having overwhelming evidence to prove our innocence, the truth is ignored. Each day

makes it harder to stay hopeful. However, I still hope that someone reading this will feel our pain. I hope that they will see the injustice that is growing and spreading and will try to stop it.

Some people only see the last name that my family and I share with my father, not the separate lives we have been building for three years. To the authorities, we are guilty only by association. They don't see us as individuals with our own dreams. We are six innocent people, including 5 years old twins, trapped in a nightmare we didn't create.

We came to the US for personal reasons. The move was very hard for every single one of us. Like many other immigrant families, we had to work really hard to adapt to the new environment. Struggling with the English language, school, and day to day tasks are every immigrant's secret battles. Like a lot of people, we overcame these challenges and we tried to give back to our community. My brother and I used to volunteer in community food drives and my mother and I taught English to other struggling immigrants.

As a family, my mom always encouraged us to look for ways to help others. She encouraged us to have good relationships with everyone, regardless of their religion, race, or ethnicity. Finally, after three years of hard work, we were all relatively settled.

Things were finally becoming routine and we were all trying to improve our lives.

I thought that I was finally going to harvest all the fruits of my hard work. I was so happy when my graduation day arrived and I was able to celebrate with my family on May 29th. I've been waiting and preparing for this moment my whole life, and finally it is here. I was already starting to plan for all the things that I want to do in my last summer before college.

Then, the worst nightmare that none of us could have expected or even imagined came into our life. A sudden, dramatic, awful change of events. In one minute our entire lives were changed and our plans and dreams were destroyed.

It's June 1st. My mother was working on her legal case in a cafe. My brother was hiking with his friends. I was babysitting the 9-year-old and the 5-year-old twins and we were watching a movie together. Around 1 pm, several police cars showed up in the neighborhood. Worried, I called my mom to tell her. She said that maybe it was a follow-up from yesterday's incident, since there was a fight in the neighborhood the night before. 2 hours later, more police cars showed up and some of them blocked our parking lot. At 3 pm my brother came home and was wondering why there were so many police cars in the neighborhood?

Suddenly, I heard a different ringtone in the house. I went to check where it was coming from and I ended up finding my dad's phone and wallet in a bag under the desk. I checked the phone and my mom was calling. I picked it up, astonished. My mom was confused; how was I answering my dad's phone, who was supposedly working at that time? I was worried, so I told my mom to come back home.

I ran to the window to see what was happening and I saw police officers and officers wearing FBI vests surrounding my mom's car. They told my mom that they have nothing against her, but that she has to go with them to talk about an issue concerning her husband. I heard my mom asking if my father was alive. She was worried that he might have gotten into a car accident.

My dad used to say that his reason for not coming back home at night is being very tired and afraid of dying in a car accident. The officer said he was fine and that he was being held in Boulder. Then my mom told the officers that my father's phone was inside the house, and offered to bring it with her. The officers were surprised that his phone was with us and told her to bring it with her to the station.

While they were there I called to check on my mother and brother. My brother said that when

he asked the officer if the issue was bad, he said it is very bad. Hearing this my brother thought that it might be on the news if it was that bad. So we both looked up Colorado news and that was how we found out. I couldn't believe the articles. I didn't think it was possible for my very quiet father to do something so outrageous, until I saw the video. The person in that video may have looked like my father, but I couldn't believe that this was the person I knew.

Throughout our entire lives, my mom did most things concerning me and my siblings. On the other hand, my dad was mostly responsible for the financial support. We always appreciated him working hard to feed and support 7 people, which was never an easy task. My dad is a man of few words. He doesn't share his thoughts or concerns with us or with anyone in his family. We never find out if he is sick or has any problems with work except by accident. We would find a bag of medicine under his name, or mail that is addressed to him. My mom used to always beg him to open up to her and to share his worries and thoughts with her. Nonetheless, she always failed. My father never changed and I don't think he ever opened up to anybody. At least not to us, his family. His answer to any question is "I'm fine" even if he is not.

What was actually insane was that he was

acting completely normal before the incident. At my graduation, he was actually there celebrating with me. Little did any of us know that behind his happy face, was a plan that will destroy everything.

The FBI told us they wanted to search the house so we had to stay in a hotel for the first night. That night none of us were able to sleep. My mother didn't eat or sleep for 3 days. She was continuously crying and repeating "this can't be true, that is not my husband". We were trying not to scare the little ones who still thought their father was working, and that he would bring them candy when he comes back on Monday.

I was thinking about how could he possibly do that? How could he hurt all these innocent people? How could he completely abandon us? The father I knew had no hatred or grudge whatsoever. How could he change 180 degrees from a passive person who wouldn't even take actions for issues concerning his family, to a person that is fighting and making crazy tremendous actions.

We spent 2 days in the hotel, not knowing that they would be our last days of freedom for a long time.

Just like other people, we were lied to by DHS (Department of Homeland Security) and ICE agents. On the third day, they told us that staying in the hotel was dangerous and that we should go to another hotel for our safety. Only two Homeland Security agents got us from the room, while 15 others were waiting for us outside.

We drove for an hour to Florence still believing that we were going to a hotel. To our surprise, we arrived at a place in the middle of nowhere. We drove into a garage and watched it close behind us. We felt trapped. We thought we got kidnapped. We were in two vans surrounded by strangers that we don't even know if they are police or not. The ICE agents didn't show their badges or identify themselves at all until we got inside and saw the holding cells. They took our phones and all our property, and we stayed in a cold cell for more than 8 hours. It was the beginning of the end. We were overcome with terror. We tried to explain that we had a case, and that it was pending. But the ICE officers didn't even seem to hear us.

While we were waiting, we saw another detained man in the cell in front of us. He refused to put his fingerprints in the system. So the ICE agents chose to use force with him, pinning him on the ground and forcing his fingers on the device.

There were three of them and they were aggressively roughing up a man half their size. It was so bad that the detainee couldn't walk straight after they were done.

Meanwhile, every single one of us watched in horror thinking that we were next. The twins were only 4 years old at the time and they were crying hysterically when the agents called our mother. Fortunately, they told us that they would only use that type of force with us if we refused to follow their orders.

In the cell, we were all worried. We were trying to make sense of what happened. But everything happened so fast that nothing had really sunk in yet. We were devastated. The agents told us that we will go to a nice family facility, where we will stay until we have our court. They told us that in the facility they will take away all of our property and our phones. We were worried that we won't have any connection to the outside world. For a moment, that was our biggest worry.

From the cell to the Dilley detention facility, we have been followed everywhere by 7 people. At that time we were just feeling numb. Our entire lives had been flipped in a matter of hours. None of us were actually able to understand or process the things that were happening to us.

When we finally got to the facility in the middle of the night, the sight of the facility didn't exactly match the "nice family facility" that ICE agents told us about. It just looked like a prison. We were thinking how we have never done anything to deserve this, especially the 5 and the 9 years old, who haven't even lived their childhood yet like other normal kids.

After dropping us off, one of the escorts that accompanied us said "Be strong. No matter what happens you have to be strong. Just remember that." Her words scared me more than it gave me hope. We went in expecting to get out after several days, but unfortunately no one told us the whole story. They didn't tell us that we will have one court after another and that it would be near impossible for us to get out.

It's very hard to truly describe our situation in detention. It's very hard to put all the different feelings and emotions into words. But I can say for sure that every day we spend in this detention is horrible. This place broke something in us, something that I don't know if we will ever be able to fix. We are not the same people who came here in June 2025. We had to fight for basic things like food and clothes. Things we had access to all the time.

We saw a lot of cruelty and injustice whether it was from ICE, DHS, or the officers in Dilley.

What changed us was every time we saw someone struggling and couldn't help them. Every time we were given false hope and expected to get out but didn't. Every time we were not treated like humans. Every single one of those times broke something in us.

The rules in this detention are made with consideration to the staff's needs not the residents'. All the long lists of harsh rules are taking away the kids' childhoods. Detaining kids here is like giving them a prison sentence. The kids are behind in their development, education and growth. There is a big part of their childhood that is destroyed. Especially those that have been detained for months like my little siblings.

Only 10% of the officers here treat us like humans. The others think that we are residents and apparently can't be considered humans anymore. I could never understand why is it that hard to be nice. The officers talk arrogantly and treat the residents like they are nothing. Their actions would be anywhere from eating lollipops and candy in front of the kids, knowing that the kids want but can't get any, to criticizing officers who help the residents and telling them, "you don't have to do all of that, if they have a problem they can figure it out on their own". The officers barge into the room, while we are sleeping, with their radios on full volume. Instead of just checking if we are in the room, some would wake us up on purpose.

For 8 months our lives have been wasted by standing in lines until recently they started releasing some people. When there are a lot of people, our days are defined by lines. We wait two hours to get a computer and one hour for food three times a day. It takes a two-hour wait just to get one dose of medicine, which we need at least twice a day—after we have already waited three hours to get it prescribed. If we need to buy anything we stand for three hours outside the commissary to buy very expensive, off-brand, low-quality items. Our whole day is spent running around from one line to the next. They manage to keep us very busy waiting that by the end of the day, we have no energy left. The services of the place simply can't support huge amount of people.

If we had a complaint or a request, it would take days or even months for someone to get back to us. And when they get back, they give us nothing. If we are lucky, they will give us false promises. We would have to go from one person to the other to get anything. In the end, we might not even get our needs taken care of because of ridiculous reasons like miscommunication.

The supervisors here just cover up for each other. Somehow every grievance or complaint that we have is unfounded, even if we have

evidence and witnesses to support the grievance. They make promises that they don't keep and change what they say all the time. Even though we learned to document everything they say, they still deny saying it.

It's very easy to see the truth about this place and about us. You just need to be truthful to yourself and follow the facts. Visiting this place isn't enough. I encourage anyone who thinks this place is good to come live like a resident for just a month and then he will feel what I am talking about. Being detained is a very different and difficult experience and unless you go through it, you can't really feel it or value it.

The staff would make the place seem like paradise while the reality is far from that. They claim they have balanced meals while in reality they give us processed food multiple times per week. It's one thing to eat hot dogs once a month but it's another to have to eat it twice a week. They claim that the food is good while I found a fingernail in the bowl of fruit and others have found worms in the food. My siblings cry because they don't want to eat the same bad food again everyday, and if we didn't have some money to buy instant noodles, they won't eat anything.

The medical staff just put on an act and pretend like they take care of the residents' medical needs but it is not true. If I wrote about every single time a resident's health was neglected, I could write a book.

My 5-year-old sister was scheduled to do a surgery because she has 13 cavities and will not be able to stay seated during the anesthesia. We were hoping that we will get out but her teeth are getting worse and they hurt more. She went to medical two months ago and was supposed to be referred but until now nothing happened.

One of the residents had an infection and was in pain for months, while the nurse just gave her pain medication. Her illness got worse to the point that she had to be hospitalized for 3 days. The doctor said that it was very dangerous to ignore the illness for that long and that she should have been treated earlier.

Because of all the stress, dark spots started showing on my mother's face and is increasing. The provider didn't really know what was her diagnosis and said that she had to see a dermatologist. That was almost 3 months ago and she still hasn't been transferred.

It took me 5 months to get proper glasses, including staying 2 months without any glasses.

And here we are having been detained since June 4th. Having one court after another. Praying that we get out soon.

We believe that what happened to the victims of the attack is dreadful. We believe that no one should ever experience what they have experienced. My heart goes out to all of them and to their families.

We are paying for something that we had absolutely no knowledge of. What my father did goes against everything me and my family believe in. If I had know, I would have definitely tried to stop him. I would have stopped him from hurting others and hurting us.

My dream is to go to Harvard medical school and become a doctor. I want to help others. I want to make a change. I would have never expected to go from a girl who was doing everything to achieve her dream, to a girl that had her life destroyed just because of her father. I can't have a goal to help people and at the same time participate or even approve of hurting others.

No sane person would ever stay willingly in this detention, not if he didn't have a big reason forcing him to stay. ICE knows that this is true so they keep the people here as long as possible to force them to give up and ask to be deported even if they will be harmed. ICE keeps the people detained

for so long knowing that it is most likely they will not get a fair hearing. Most residents if not all, end up with removal orders. It doesn't matter how strong their case is or whether they will be harmed in their countries. The judges don't really hear the testimony or look at the evidence. They just find a reason to deport people, even if it was just a technicality.

What makes our situation worse is that the DHS and ICE insist on detaining us with no evidence. They chose to not investigate. They chose to ignore the results of the FBI investigation that clearly shows we didn't know anything. They ignored the investigation that went on for more than 20 hours. We explained that my father doesn't come home except one day per week. He sleeps in his car and we don't talk to him that much. And as written in the FBI's transcript, he bought all the equipment on his way to the scene. We couldn't have possibly suspected anything. We have tons of evidence but the DHS is choosing to close their eyes. We have another judge's decision that also agrees with the FBI and that states that we had no knowledge of my father's actions. Still, the DHS is choosing to pursue the baseless accusations and ignore the evidence.

Unfortunately, in immigration courts the burden falls on us to prove everything, while the government is allowed to detain us based on suspicions and without any real evidence. 26

After waiting for 7 months, we didn't even get a fair trial. Our lawyer had to withdraw because of health issues so we told the judge we needed a lawyer to represent us. We told her we are not lawyer and that we have a right to counsel. She, however, denied our request for more time and forced us to proceed "pro se" violating our right to due process. All she said, after almost an hour of trying to explain that we can't represent ourselves and that we have counsel but they need time, was "we are moving forward with this case". She then decided to read out our applications, to us and asked in general if we wanted to change anything. Then suddenly, she told us she denied our case. She said it was because 2 sub-questions on our application were not answered and that made our application incomplete. We couldn't believe what we were hearing.

She said she read the applications to us and asked if we wanted to change anything. We told her that just reading the questions and not explaining them doesn't help. We told her that if she asked us the questions directly we would have answered. We were left in shock of how unfair the entire trial was when the judge adjourned the court. To deny our case for a minor error, without a lawyer present, is not the justice we were promised. We stood alone against the DHS. The judge expected us to represent ourselves while the government sat across with professional counsel. The trial was over before it started because we were never equal.

Ever since our bond hearing on Wednesday January 21st got denied, we have been falling apart. The hope of getting our bond granted was helping us endure hardships. The support of our community and friends pushed us to keep fighting and never lose hope. Their kindness and help means the world to us, especially in such a difficult time.

We have previously won our bond on September 12<sup>th</sup> but the DHS decided to drag the decision and get it remanded. The same bond that, when remanded, went on from December 15<sup>th</sup> to January 21<sup>st</sup> with us praying that there will be no more delays and that we will finally earn our freedom back. In the end, it got denied for ridiculous reasons. We thought we have reached the light at the end of the tunnel, but we were hallucinating. I don't understand what more evidence could we have provided to prove that we are innocent and that we should get released.

Even though our community and friend held a press conference to support our release two days before the last bond hearing, the judge thought that we don't have community support.

ICE claims that they can't release us because we are under appeal, but it is not true. At least 10 families who are under appeal got released. So why are we not being treated fairly?

Watching other people get released while we are forced to stay detained is extremely painful. My siblings cry because their friends keep getting released while they are trapped here wondering when it will be their turn.

Two days after the bond, I was separated from my family, as if what we have been through wasn't enough. I will never forget the look of fear and helplessness on my mother's face as she watched me being taken away and couldn't do anything to prevent it. The officers didn't even give me a chance to take my stuff or say goodbye to my little siblings. After we heard the Judge's decision and after we realized that we will be detained for who knows how long, our strength and will hit the rock bottom. Just as we were trying to process everything, we were separated. At that moment, everything that we had left was completely shattered.

Ramadan is almost over. Being detained in Ramadan has been extremely difficult. My family and I are already physically and mentally drained from being detained for more than 9 months. However, to be trapped in detention while fasting for almost 13 hours from sunrise to sunset feels impossible.

I have always thought my first Ramadan away from my family would be because I'm in college. Never in my life did I think I would be spending Ramadan in a detention center, let alone away from my family.

I remember how my mother and I were helping give away food for the community last Ramadan. I remember cooking together to host the Iftar (the first meal after fasting) for the community. I remember us rushing and running all over the house to make

sure that everything was cooked and ready on time for Iftar. I remember the responsibility of guiding the little kids to pay attention to the prayers and teach them new things every day. As much as these memories make me happy, they also remind me that I will not be able to do any of these things this Ramadan. I miss being part of the community and feeling that sense of unity.

Ramadan is supposed to be a month of spiritual growth. It is a month where we as Muslims get to be closer to God and become more attached to our fate. It also has a special way of bringing kids closer to their community, especially when they get to be part of prayers like Taraweeh at the mosque or join the community Iftar. It is such a meaningful time for kids, helping them grow closer to their God and to their community in a way that feels joyful.

Unfortunately, both my 5-year-old twin siblings and my 9-year-old sister are deprived of such an experience.

Ramadan is followed by a huge Eid celebration. It is a big celebration where they get to enjoy the candy and the toys with their friends. It would be very hard to miss this celebration too just like they missed the other Eid celebration back in June 2025.

The little ones don't understand why we are being detained. They wish they could just eat little things like bananas or chocolate. They want to go back to their friends, to their school, to their house. They feel trapped and helpless and it breaks my heart to

see them like that.

We would have never imagined that we would stay detained for 9 months and what makes it worse is that we don't know when we will get out. It's very hard to watch our lives and dreams be destroyed while we are just waiting helplessly. We are stripped of the right to have a say about our lives. DHS and ICE want to control and determine how our lives will go, just like they have for the last 9 months.

I feel like DHS and ICE put us at the bottom of the ocean with both our hands and legs tied so we can't help ourselves. They put us so deep in the water that even though a lot of people want to help us, they can't reach us.

My family and I dream of the day that we will get out. We forgot what it feels like to be free. We miss what it feels like to wake up in our own beds with our phones next to us. We dream about how we want our first meal together as a family to be pizza and then cake. We dream of the time when each one of us will be in school and will be able to work on his future. We dream of a normal life where we still are able to make a difference in the world.

I urge everyone to look at the evidence of our innocence. To see how unfairly we have been treated by DHS and ICE. Regardless of everything happening to us, I still have hope

There are two kinds of people whose actions seriously harms others. They are the ignorant and the ones who choose to overlook the truth for personal benefits. On one hand, ignorance produces hatred. Ignorance produces misjudgement. Ignorance produces injustice. It is much better to not talk at all or comment about something that you don't know everything about. This way you avoid hurting others and making mistakes that you will regret when the truth come out.

On the other hand, the people who choose to overlook the truth for personal benefits, like a job, are very dangerous. They are willingly choosing to overlook the truth and punish innocent people. They try to comfort themselves by saying that their hands are tied, but it isn't true. They just need to be willing to always follow the truth no matter the consequences.

I don't know when our detention will end. I don't know how we will deal with the effects this place imposed on us. I don't know how the victims can recover from what happened.

But I know that the truth never dies. We just need more people who are willing to spend the time and effort to find it. I just hope that when the truth comes out that it is not too late and that the damage is fixable. We need to have a chance to heal and to find peace, if that is even possible.

I believe there are people who care, who will see what is happening to us and act with compassion and empathy. We are still hoping that the process will play out well in the end. We know that the truth will come out. The injustice keeps on growing and spreading until the people decide to take actions to stop it.

Kids and adults are under great pressure. The detention has to stop before something bad happens. In what world is detaining people with no criminal history for indefinite periods of time justified? We need everyone to step up and say that detaining people especially families for indefinitely long periods should be illegal. This place could be bearable for 20 days maximum, more than that is really hard. In 20 days there is a low chance that the residents will get sick and need to go to medical. In 20 days the residents won't have to interact with officers that much. The longer we stay the harder it is.

When will our punishment end? When will we be free? No family should ever be separated or have to stay detained for months.

We are fighting because we know we are innocent. What happened is terrible but there is no point in destroying the lives of six innocent people. We pray for someone to look at us as humans who deserve to live freely.

My name is [REDACTED] I am 16 years old, and I am currently detained in the Dilley detention facility, where I have been for the last 9 months.

I landed in Colorado on May 28<sup>th</sup>, after being away from my family for almost a year in Michigan where I went to school. From the moment I landed my family and I only had one focus, to prepare for my sister's graduation which would take place the very next day. Right after my flight, my mom and I went to an apple store to buy my sister her graduation gift, a new iPhone. Her graduation was the only reason I took off from school. Our school was year-round only ending in July. My [REDACTED] flight to Michigan was

booked for June, 7th.

On May 29<sup>th</sup> we all celebrated my sister's graduation. Everyone was excited and happy, and we all had a great time.

2 days later, my father told us that he was going to work. My father worked in Denver as an Uber ~~xxx~~ driver. He would work almost every day of the week and sleep in his car to save money, as he was the only source of income for a family of 7, which was no easy task. That was the last we heard from him, that was May 31<sup>st</sup>.

On June 1st, I went on a hike with a few friends of mine, as I was trying to make the best use of my short vacation before I had to return to school.

However, when I returned home, I was greeted by dozens of police and FBI cars that surrounded the neighborhood. When my mom returned and was surrounded by the police cars, ~~ex~~ It was then that we were told to go to the police station. That was the moment our lives fell apart.

What we found out at the police station was that earlier that day, my father carried out a heinous act of violence against peaceful protesters in Boulder. An act of violence which we had no knowledge of. An act of violence which I absolutely renounce and disagree with. No one should have to go through what his victims have gone through, and my heart goes out to all of them.

The use of violence is never justified. I condemn anyone who uses violence including my father.

The FBI sent us to a hotel where we stayed for the next 2 days as they searched our house. They investigated with us there for several hours again.

We were surprised to hear a loud knock on our door on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two federal agents were standing at our door step at 6am. They told us that we weren't safe in this hotel and that we are being transferred to another hotel for our safety. Scared and confused, we scrambled to gather our belongings and follow the officers. Only then did

we see the dozen other agents who had concealed their badges standing outside. They put my mom and my two youngest siblings in a separate van, while my 2 other sisters and I were taken in a separate van with a bunch of strangers. It felt like we were being kidnapped. They didn't tell us where we were going or what we were gonna do there. Several vans were escorting us and fear was starting to get a hold of us.

We finally arrived at a building that I have never seen before. When we stepped inside and saw the holding cell, we were confused. It was finally then that the agents showed their

badges and identified themselves. The agents told us they were from ICE and took all of our property. They said that they were sending us to a family detention facility. We had so many questions and tried to talk to them but they didn't seem to hear us.

They kept my family and I, 5 minor children, 2 of whom were only 4, in a cold cell with nothing but metal benches for more than 8 hours. Every moment of uncertainty that passed felt like a lifetime to us. We were already hurt and betrayed by my father's actions, and this was just making things worse.

As we reached the facility, with its high barbed wire fences and officers

everywhere, we couldn't help but feel like we were going to prison. While we were being searched and instructed at 2 in the morning, the only thing I was thinking about was my upcoming ticket, about my school and the entire life I was leaving behind me. Little did I know that the lives of my family and I will be changed forever.

In detention you struggle with simple day-to-day tasks. Things like getting clothes, getting medicine and even getting sleep, can be challenging for us. No one should ever be detained in here. No one, and especially not children.

There are so many stories and

incidents that took place in this facility, that no one could believe. The food here, for example, can be horrible. Many times my siblings and I would be too disgusted to eat. We would skip meals on many days, sometimes eating nothing but Cup Noodles the whole day. It's the only thing many people here eat, since they can't bring themselves to eat the same food over, and over, and over again. The same unhealthy food that is served every day. Also, the Cup Noodles are the only thing sold in the commissary that is affordable and edible. Everything else is either an off-brand snack or really expensive. I have seen, with my own eyes, food that

has mold in it. I even saw food with actual worms. I know people who have decided to stop eating for several days after finding hair or even human nails in their food. I personally lost 20 pounds over my time here.

Medical treatment is also a big issue here. The medical department is not prepared for most human needs. You may sit for 2-3 hours in the waiting room at medical, only to be seen by a nurse, since you have to visit and complain a lot to be taken seriously and be seen by a doctor. I suffered from appendicitis while being detained here. I had severe abdominal pain that started at 9 am. My pain was so severe

I couldn't walk to the medical. No one checked on me until 2pm, when I was wheelchaired to medical, only to be seen by a nurse who told me "I can't help you. Go and come back if you still have pain in 3 days". I told her I couldn't even walk. I cried and begged her to help me, yet all she did was send me to the waiting room.

I then fell to my hands and knees and threw up inside the waiting room. It was only then that I was taken seriously and transferred to a nearby ER. It was only then that I was given proper medication, it was already 4pm, more than 7 hours after my pain had started.

I had to wait till 11pm after that

waiting for an ambulance to take me to a proper hospital, 6 hours after we arrived.

Many of the officers here don't treat us like humans. They treat us like they are better than us, like because we were detained, suddenly we don't have human needs. They eat fruits and lollipops in front of children, knowing very well that all these kids want but can't have any of that. They don't care about the looks of heartbreak on the children's faces as they watch them sadly, with tears in their eyes. Also, you are only giving 5 pieces of clothes here, 2 shirts, a sweater, and 2 pants. Asking for new clothes could take up to two weeks, and you would end

just getting used clothes after all. you have no privacy whatsoever either. All rooms have windows so that anyone passing by can see you. Also, officers can come in randomly and look through your drawers and things for "security checks". Anyone could walk into your room at anytime even if you are sleeping. Furthermore, the lights have to be on at all times. I have struggled with sleeping many nights because of the bright fluorescent lights. I haven't slept like a human being in 9 months.

Over the last 9 months, we have tried to keep our hopes up, tried to have faith and patience, and tried to endure the hard times that we are dealing with. We were very hopeful, more than 5 months ago, that

was near. That we will be released after winning our bond in September. But however took that brief moment of happiness away from us by setting an automatic stay and appealing the decision. We were heartbroken but still thought that there was a chance in federal court. We waited patiently, while every day in detention took an even larger toll on us. After a long wait, we won in federal court and were supposed to be released by December 2nd. But to our surprise, the DHS had filed a discretionary stay, meaning even longer detention.

Everytime we had a brief moment of joy, every time we thought we could see the light at the end of the tunnel, the

DHS took that away from us. They refuse to believe that we didn't have knowledge of my father's plans and choose to ignore all the evidence. They would much rather keep 5-year old children in detention ~~in~~ indefinitely. ICE and DHS have released and paroled many people with the same situation as us. They were all under appeal and were all released. I have seen every friend I made for the last 9 months leave. Every time I would make a new friend, they would leave before me, over, and over, and over again. I always wonder what have we done so that we aren't like them? Why can't my 5-year old siblings leave like all their friends have? What did we do wrong?

We have cooperated with law enforcement every step of the way throughout my dad's investigation. We have brought ample evidence to prove our ignorance of his actions. We have tried every possible way for release, and have waited for more than 9 months. We have won over and over in our bonds and federal courts. But yet, here we are, still detained indefinitely without an end in sight.

This prolonged detention has and continues to destroy our lives. It is slowly killing us on the inside. Our mental health is at great risk. It is rapidly deteriorating with every day we spend here. Our lives are without purpose. We are

just waiting for this nightmare to end. My younger siblings have frequent nightmares and struggle to sleep at night. My 5-year old sister always sees the same nightmare where she is being chased by something that wants to hurt her, but she can't escape because there are fences and closed gates in her way. My sibling sometimes says things like "I hate my life", "They are all so much luckier than us", and "why can't we leave like our friends?". It breaks my heart to see them like this. My own mental health is worsening too. Every day I spend here crushes my spirit. The separation of my sister from our family breaks my heart, especially during Ramadan our sacred

month. Ramadan is a month of spiritual growth. It is supposed to be a month of joy and happiness where all Muslims come together and celebrate who they are. Yet here we are, unable to even be reunited with our own family. The helplessness I feel when I look at my family kills me. It feels like this will never end, like my old life is left behind me and I will never be able to get it back.

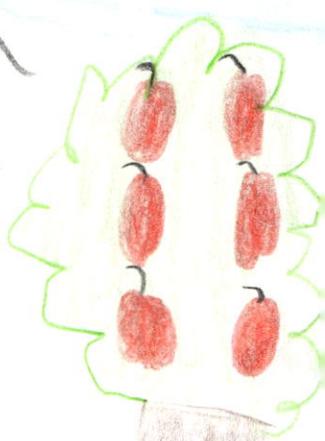
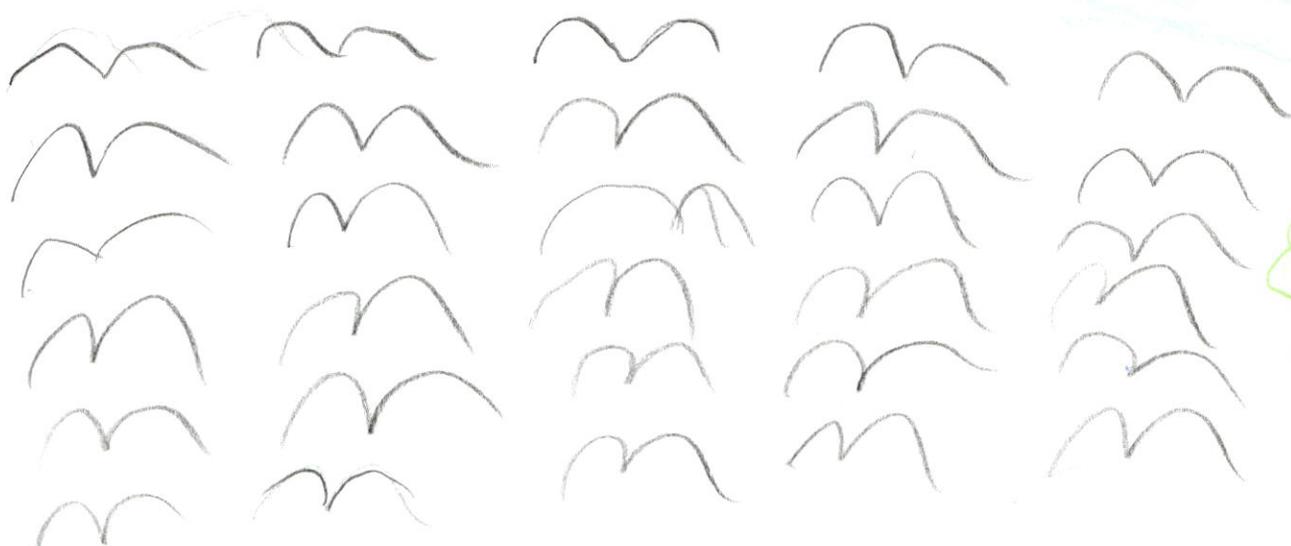
What we are living through isn't just a story, it's a daily reality of fear, depression, sleepless nights and a constant of feeling of being trapped. Now we remain detained without any clue about the ending point. We

can't take this anymore. We are well past our breaking point. Even though we have followed every legal step, cooperated fully and proved our ignorance in regards to my father's plans, we are still stuck in a place that treats children like prisoners. All we're asking for is freedom, the chance to leave this place and get our lives back. I beg the answer to this question, Is there a limit? Is there a point when DHS will stop and look at us as human beings? Will they ever look at these children with sympathy? These children who have spent almost a fifth of their lives in detention<sup>51</sup>

I do not know. All I know is that we can't take this any longer.

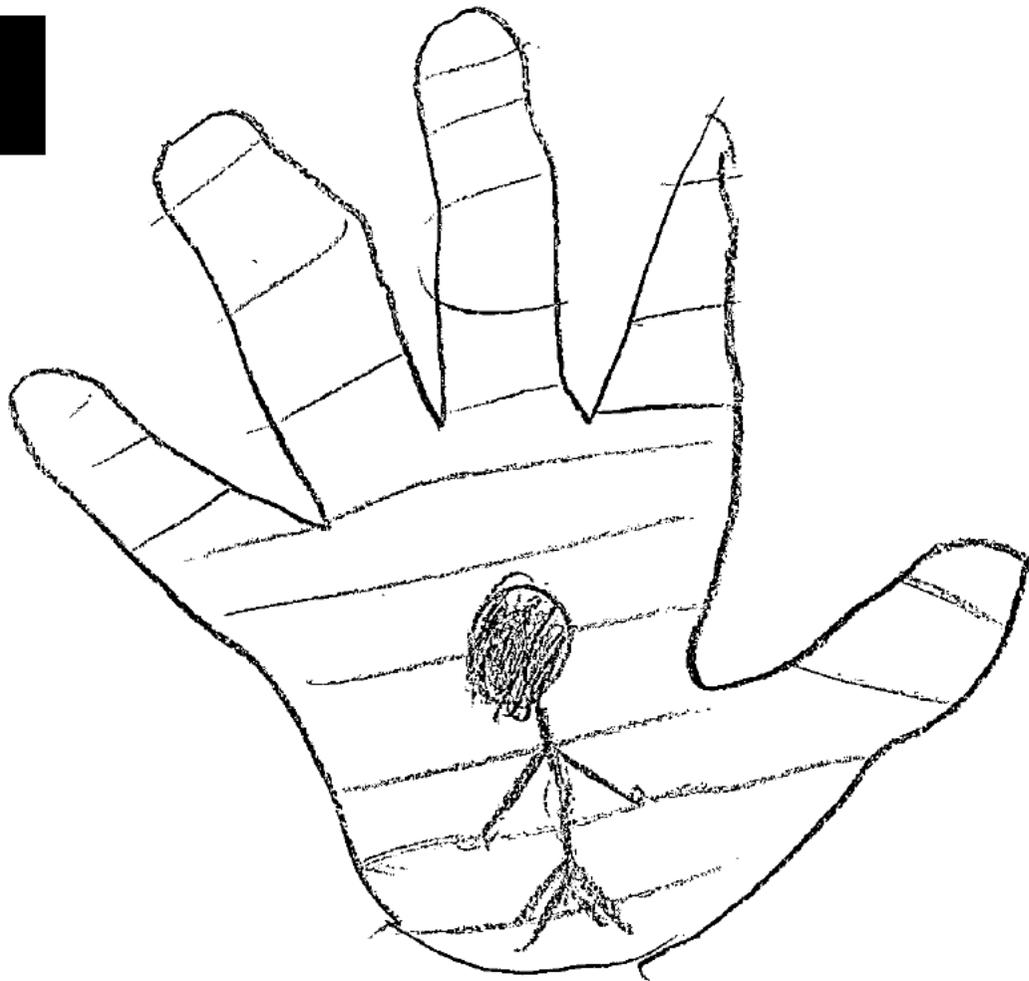
I hope that sharing this experience shows that families like ours deserve empathy and compassion, not endless detention, and that real change can start when people listen and act. Freedom is a human right, and we are begging for it.

My name is [REDACTED]  
I am nine years old.  
We have been here for nine months.  
I really miss playing with my toys and  
my watch.  
When will we get out of here?  
I want to go back home.  
All of my friends left.  
I miss all of them.  
Why can't we be released like them?  
I really want to be released.  
Every day we see people leave.  
But us no, I want to get out and eat  
pizza and bananas.  
I really want to go to school.  
I miss my friends from school so much.  
I really miss my sister.  
I really miss my mom's food.  
Please get us out of here.  
I hate Core Civic 



When we will go home?



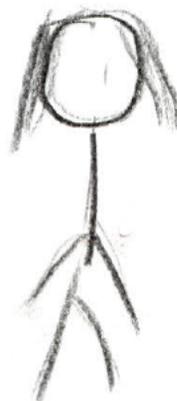


I AM 5 YEARS OLD  
I WANT GO HOME

I AM 5 YEARS OLD

I WANT GO SCHOOL

I MISS MY BEAR



MY NAME IS

