

# The Boston Globe

Crime & Courts

## Detained immigrants claim civil rights violations at Plymouth County Correctional Facility

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434 words

10 March 2023

The Boston Globe

BSTNGB

English

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A civil rights complaint filed Thursday on behalf of immigrants detained at the Plymouth County Correctional Facility says severe restrictions on phone calls, videoconference calls, and mail are preventing immigrants from communicating with their lawyers and families, sometimes resulting in missed deadlines for court filings.

The complaint asks Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell to open an investigation.

“Individuals detained in Plymouth do not have meaningful access to counsel or anyone else in the outside world,” according to the 17-page filing, which says the communication barriers have left detained immigrants “unable to receive crucial evidence, unable to obtain attorneys.”

Immigrants, many of whom do not speak English, are held at the facility per a contract with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement while they await legal proceedings with “life-altering consequences,” the complaint said.

“It is crucial that individuals facing such grave legal proceedings maintain the rights afforded to them by law, including the right to speak with attorneys, connect with family and friends outside the prison’s walls, and receive information in a language they understand,” the complaint said.

The jail is violating state and federal laws, according to the complaint, which was filed by numerous immigration advocates, including Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network, Prisoners’ Legal Services of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Reform Institute, MIRA Coalition, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program.

A spokesman for Campbell’s office confirmed receiving the complaint on Thursday and said “our office is reviewing it.” The Plymouth Sheriff’s Office, which runs the jail, could not be immediately reached for comment.

According to the complaint, the jail prohibits all incoming calls and does not allow attorneys to schedule calls with their clients or leave voicemails. When calls are made, the prison provides no space for confidential calls and charges \$69.99 for a 30-minute videoconference call. The prison also opens all mail.

The facility’s contract with ICE is up for renewal in September, according to the complaint.

If the facility fails to address the violations alleged in the complaint, Campbell should recommend that ICE terminate its contract and release all detained immigrants at the facility, the complaint said.

“This complaint is just one example among many of the ways in which immigration detention consistently falls short of basic human decency,” said Sarang Sekhavat, political director of the MIRA Coalition. “Instead of seeking to expand the use of detention, the Biden Administration should be ending contracts with facilities such as Plymouth that continually demonstrate a blatant disregard for human rights.”

Document BSTNGB0020230310ej3a000be

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