

**Monitoring Reports on Retaliation Against Detainee
Human Rights Monitors at the
South Louisiana Correctional Center,
Basile, Louisiana**

*Compiled by the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice based on
the firsthand accounts of detainee human rights monitors.*

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These detainee human rights monitors' testimonies demonstrate the risks detainees take when they decide to complain about human rights conditions and detention standards. In Basile Louisiana, even amidst increased regional and federal ICE monitoring of the facility, contract jail staff have continued to aggressively retaliate against detainee human rights monitors. Detainees have been threatened with criminal prosecution, placed in solitary confinement, and otherwise denied access to fundamental basic necessities in order to quell their complaints and coerce others into remaining quiet.

Any system of oversight of ICE contract facilities must include fundamental and enforceable protections from retaliation for detainees who cooperate with federal monitors.

In general, detainees monitoring human rights conditions reported serious concerns regarding extreme scarcity and deplorable conditions, lack of access to fundamental information, severe isolation, and an utterly non-transparent and interminable system of deportation. The investigation also revealed an ongoing lack of responsible oversight by ICE. Again and again, detainees make it clear that these conditions have pushed them to the limits of their physical and mental wellbeing. More information about these conditions is available upon request.

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Human Rights Monitor: Edgar Nelson Bojorge Alcantara

Dome and cell: Bearcat 2

Date: 08/03/09

I, Edgar Nelson Bojorge, have been in this jail for five months. I am now in solitary confinement, because I tried to bring attention to the humiliation and abuse that we are facing in ICE's detention system. For over a month now, other detainees and I have been monitoring human rights conditions in Basile, Louisiana. ICE has tried to silence us and suppress our complaints. But although the jail is isolated and we detainees are hidden from view, it is difficult for the truth not to come out. I have faced threats, abuse, retaliation and punishment for my role in monitoring and reporting the conditions here in Basile. But I will continue to report the abuses as long as I am here.

On Sunday, August 5, 2009, I began an indefinite hunger strike. After weeks of monitoring the abuses here and making complaints, I have seen no results other than retaliation. I speak for all of the detainees when I say I am fed up with the indecency we face here. I am fed up with the way our complaints are silenced and suppressed by ICE and jail staff. I will continue to refuse food until I meet with Dr. Dora Schriro.

I want to explain to her and to President Obama that this jail needs to be shut down. Instead of detention, we need a just immigration system in this country. You cannot call ten million Latinos criminals, and then wage a war on them that lines the pockets of private companies that run prisons. You cannot arrest thousands of people, and then forget about them as the rot in ICE jails like this one, while private contractors profit from every night that we are in jail.

When I first arrived to this jail months ago, it was 1 a.m. in the morning. I could tell immediately that people were treated disrespectfully here. I quickly noticed that a lot of people were being subjected to some very unjust things. I remember on one occasion, one detainee fell off his bunk. No one would give him medical attention. No one would help him. This sparked some detainees decided to go on hunger strike – only then did they get the attention of the guards so he could get necessary medical care.

When I saw so much suffering and disrespect, I started to document the abuses. I also started to learn about detention standards and our human rights. The jail staff reacted immediately. When I wanted to go to the library to research the rights of detainees, several guards told me I could not go. They claimed it was because chemicals were held next to the library. Another guard explained to me that all of the books were in English so they wouldn't help me. I was speaking to her in English, and pointed this out to her. But she was trying to tell me that I wouldn't be able to read those books.

On many occasions we tried to talk to the guards and to ICE about all of the problems with the detention facility. We submitted many grievances, verbally and in writing. In ICE detention,

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our lives have become humiliation and abuse. We live in utter isolation, cut off from all communication with our families and community. In the experience of our families, we have disappeared. We went to work, and never came back: they have no idea where we are. It has been weeks, sometimes months, since we have spoken with them – many of us have not been able to say a word to them since we arrived in Basile.

We live in a regime of scarcity, and have to threaten hunger strikes in order to get toilet paper, soap, and underwear. Men have given one pair each of nylon underwear – what we perceived to be women's underwear. We lack the most fundamental information about legal processes and our basic rights. And we wait months to be deported back to our countries.

After weeks of being ignored for so long, we decided to take action. We went on a second hunger strike to try to pressure ICE and jail staff to improve conditions. As a result of our hunger strike they distributed 20 pairs of boxers and adjusted the air conditioning. But the bigger problems persisted, we continued to be ignored.

So we decided to hold a third hunger strike, to call more attention to the humiliation and abuse in the facility. The Vice President of the private company that runs this jail arrived to retaliate against us. ICE threatened us with solitary confinement – they handcuffed and shackled us, and led us towards the hole. They brought in the special riot squad, as if they would have to quell a riot! All the time, I would explain to them that we did not want to fight or cause any problems. All we wanted was our dignity. We respected them as human beings, but the reason for our hunger strike was the violation of our rights.

All of the guards knew that I was an active human rights monitor. After some time, they also realized that I was talking to an outside organization, reporting on the conditions inside the jail. After the hunger strike, I noticed more hostility against me. Wherever I went, I was being observed.

Recently, in one cell, a microwave started burning and set off a small electrical fire. The entire room filled with thick white smoke. We were all locked in of course, and we were suffocating. People were knocking on the window, covering their faces and mouths with towels, desperately motioning for guards to open the door. The guards refused to open the door! So I got up and gave two guards the finger. Immediately, they came to open the door and take me to the hole. At that moment you could see the contradiction: they wouldn't act to save us, but they would act to punish us.

Once I was inside the hole, they came to get me at 2:30 in the morning. They took me to their mock "courthouse." I was sentenced to 60 days in the hole.

This was obvious retaliation for my work as a human rights monitor in detention. Now I am on an indefinite hunger strike to continue my fight for respect and dignity here – things I deserve, even though I am a detainee.

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I want Dora Schriro, the special advisor to the DHS on detention, to come to Louisiana, meet with us, and bear witness to the conditions here. We want jail conditions to improve, immediately and permanently. And we want ICE to cancel its contract with the private company that is running this jail.

Each night spent by each detainee is profit for the company running the jail. The cost to the detainee is sorrow. The benefit to the jail is hundreds of thousands of dollars while we suffer without reprieve.

But we are not animals, and can't stay silent if ICE treats us as less than human.

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Human Rights Monitor: Jose Salazar

Dome and cell: Tiger 1

Date: 08/04/09

I have been in Basile jail since July 1, 2009. On Tuesday, July 28, I was put in the hole in retaliation for my work as a human rights monitor.

I have been in the hole 8 days. In other detention facilities, I have been told that the maximum amount of time you can be sentenced to the hole is 40 days; here it is 120 days. I think there are about 60 people that are in the hole now. You can hear them when the guards pass with meals. I've been in other immigration jails and this is 90% worse than anything I've seen. In El Paso and California at least they give your enough food to eat. We are punished like dogs here, with no cause or explanation.

Almost everyone in my cell was sick, and we wanted to see a doctor. I put in a request two weeks ago, and a nurse took it but they didn't do any examination or test-- they just gave me a pill. I was allergic to the medicine they gave me. and I broke out in a rash. But when I reported it to the nurse, she just said it didn't matter. My tooth is also infected and puss is coming out, there is no dentist here.

We have all been driven to desperation by the conditions and the retaliation. One of the other detainees that was in the hole went on hunger strike in there. Then the guards threatened that if he didn't eat, they would keep him in the hole even longer. He's been deported now. There was another guy that was on hunger strike for seven full days.

I was place in the hole on July 28. I was put here in retaliation for my work as a human rights monitor. There was someone in our cell that was helping us make a list of everything we lacked and the abuses. For example, we recorded that the jail hadn't provide enough hygiene products and many detainees hadn't received toothbrushes. The jail wants us to buy these basic items— it's a business.

Since the jail refused to listen to our grievances in the past, we wanted to have a hunger strike so that an observer could come in to see what was happening, and we could give them our human rights report.

So in my cell we decided to do a three hunger strike in the yard to draw attention to our need for decent and proper medical care. That morning, the majority of the people in my cell did not go to eat breakfast.

After the time for breakfast, the Captain came with the Major. We had never seen the Major before-- he had never come to our cell, and we did not know that he worked with the jail. We thought that he was part of an organization that is helping monitor the conditions. Excited by

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the opportunity to expose the conditions, everyone started to talk—about the untreated sicknesses, the food that further weakens our bodies, the filth in the cells, and the fact that the jail had ignored all our grievances and requests. I was in the middle of everything because, I was helping translate for other people. (This jail does not have any translators-- they always just use the detainees.)

Someone showed our human rights monitoring report to the Major and the Captain. They didn't say anything to us-- they just walked away. After a while, they came back and called out about four names. We thought we were going to go see our attorneys. Instead, there were guards dressed in riot gear—three or four per detainee. They didn't ask us any questions, and they did not tell us what we were charged with. I got very scared because I did not know what was happening.

Then they put me in the hole. It's very hard to tell time in there, but I think it has been eight days. They only thing I have been told is that I am under investigation, but I don't know what for. A few days ago, they told us that the investigation was over, but nothing has changed for me.

The hole is very small, about 7 by 7 feet. To give you food, they pass it through a small window in the door. There are no windows, except for the small one in the door.

In my cell, the water faucet is broken and won't turn off, so the little sink fills up and spills over and gets the floor wet. I have asked for a mop, but the jail refused. Because it is so damp, there are a lot of bugs and mosquitoes that bite you. The entire room is dirty; there is trash everywhere. The floor is full of holes and the water sits there. There is no disinfectant for the toilet and the beds are rusted. They only erratically take you to shower- whenever they want.

After three days in the hole, the guards took me to the jail "court." This "court" happens at 1:00 a.m. in the morning so that you are tired and disoriented, and you don't fully realize what they are doing to you.

The court is held in the Sergeant's office, close to the property room. It is a very small room. When you come in from the hallway, your "attorney" tells you that you have the right to remain silent, to respect the "judge," and that anything you say can be used against you. The Captain is the "judge." The assistant and secretary to the "Judge" are also present, but no one from ICE was there. My "attorney" was a detainee that works in the library. Besides telling me my "rights" in the beginning, he didn't say anything. There was another detainee who was supposed to be translating, but he couldn't translate correctly.

While you are in "court," other detainees are outside waiting in the hallway. The guards close and lock the door to the "court", so that no one hears what is happening.

After I was told my "rights," the "judge" looked over my charging documents, but he didn't say anything—it's all just a game for them. When the "judge" told me that I was under investigation, he was recording it on his tape recorder, but when I start to talk, he turned the tape

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recorder off. He barely gave me an opportunity to speak. When it ended, the “judge” only concluded that I was under investigation, and he did not tell me how long I would be in the hole.

Other detainees have told me that the “judge” tells them their only choice is to declare themselves guilty, sign, and accept 60 days in the hole. If not, the judge tells them he will assign them 120 days. People are understandably terrified.

For me, this has all been extremely difficult. I have lost my freedom and am suffering for telling the truth. I do not know what has continued to happen with my case. Inside, there is another guy who finished his 60 days and no one has gone to get him out. I don't know if the same will happen to me.

There are people who are very, very afraid of going to the hole. They think that they can even die there. They are humble people from countries where they have lived through military repression. The jail takes advantage of this, because for them, it is good that we are afraid. Many people have told me they are afraid to speak out about what is happening because they are so fearful of retaliation.

I know that the jail staff put me in the hole as retaliation because I wanted people on the outside to know the horrible conditions that we suffer through here. At no time did I disrespect anyone, I just told the truth. What I and the other detainees are saying is the truth, and the truth cannot be hidden.

At this point, the jail is trying to make temporary changes in advance of some kind of inspection. The jail is painting and making drawings on the walls. They are fixing the leaks and the mosquitoes. They are trying to fix everything and fix the detainees by locking those of us who will speak out away in the hole. If an official from the outside comes for an inspection, jail staff and ICE will take them to the dormitory with new people where no one will complain.

But we will continue to work to be able to speak the truth.

I want Dr. Dora Schriro to come and see this. I want to tell her that the guards, ICE, and all of the people in charge are not following the rules. The jail uses threats and punishments to hide the truth. I believe that if someone high up in the government came to speak with us and investigate this jail, they would close it down. If honest government officials saw these conditions, they would agree that they should close this place and transfer us to a facility with

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decent conditions and people in charge that know how to work with immigrants.

The jail wants to cover the entire sun with one finger, but the pain that people feel can't be changed. The only solution for this jail is to close it. There are no rules. ICE lets the jail take whatever actions will keep us quiet.

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Human Rights Monitor: Fausto González

Dome and cell: Wolf 4

Date: 08/03/09

My name is Fausto González, and I have been in this jail in Basile since June 24. Sometimes I think that everything that is happening is a nightmare. Almost everyone in this country was an immigrant here at some point in their past, yet we are struggling to protect our basic physical and mental health and dignity.

Since ICE transferred me here, I have witnessed tremendous abuses and violations. My health has deteriorated because of the bad conditions. I started to work as a human rights monitor and write the abuses that I saw. I tried to talk to jail and ICE staff, but nothing changed. They told me that this was a prison, and what I saw was what I got. The ICE officials refused to talk to detainees about the conditions at the jail. Initially, I hoped that the ICE officers would help us. After talking to them, I became more demoralized. They told the other detainees and me that conditions at this jail are not their problem or responsibility, but I know that isn't right. I know conditions here are ultimately ICE's responsibility. I've been talking to other detainees about the different problems and how to try to resolve them. We decide to go on hunger strike to call attention to the problem. In the next door cell, several people were taken to the hole for their participation in monitoring and reporting on human rights violations at the jail.

I know that this is not right. Even though we are immigrants and in this detention center, we still have the right to speak out about the truth. But the jail's tactics to hide the truth are working. Because of fear, many people prefer to say nothing because they are afraid of retaliation and do not want to spend time in the hole.

I have been on a hunger strike for two day, but I have not told the guards because I am very afraid of the hole-- I am claustrophobic, but I don't think they will respect this medical condition. I also have asthma, but they have still placed me in a dorm with cigarette smoke. They are capable of anything and they do not care.

There are many people who give in to their fear and do not speak out about the real problems here. They just hope for quick deportations and try to endure. I am working to improve the conditions so that other people, including those that just come here for two or three days, are treated the way they deserve to be treated.

I believe that if Dr. Dora Schriro hears the truth, she will understand the problems with the conditions and the repression here. She should install an independent person in every ICE jail ensure that the jails respect the human rights of immigrants there. There is no solution for this jail, though, except to shut it down.

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Human Rights Monitor: John Pulido

Dome and cell: Wolf 4

Date: 08/03/09

My name is John Pulido and I have been here in Basile since June 25, 2009.

Before ICE transferred me to Basile, I was in immigration detention in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Philadelphia, and New Mexico. I've been in ICE's hands since February 26th of this year. Of all those jails, this is the worst.

The other detainees and I have made a lot of "grievances" to ICE. They ignored our complaints or repeatedly told us it was better if we spoke to the Captain or the Warden. We never saw results. A group of detainees and I decided to start writing down a list of the problems and talking to others to see if they had the same experience. Some people did not want to admit it because they were afraid ICE would retaliate against them for speaking up.

In my dormitory, we also decided to participate in a peaceful hunger strike to draw attention to how bad the conditions are. In my dormitory of 50 people, only six people went to eat breakfast that day. In the other dormitory, another 20 or 30 people went on hunger strike the same day. Once the jail saw that so many people were participating in a hunger strike, they admitted to us that officials were coming to inspect the jail. Jail staff ordered us to clean the dormitory. Other detainees and I told jail staff that we wanted to speak directly to whoever was coming to do the inspection-- we told jail staff we wanted to present our unanswered grievances to them. We told this to the major, captain, and warden of the jail.

I told them that we are living like dogs here. I told them that we deserved at least the basic supplies-- three pairs of socks, three pairs of boxers, shoes, soap, and tooth brushes and tooth paste every week. We need recreation sometimes we have none at all. And the food that we receive here is very low quality--sometimes breakfast just French fries. Lunch is this chicken in gravy with a biscuit. It's not at all nutritious, and it is affecting our health.

You know, if you could really see what the conditions in the dorm are like, then you would understand. When Joaquin was released from the hole, his commissary food had been eaten by rats. Those rats are making everyone sick. But do they bring us to doctors? No, they say fill out a request, and then they just throw the request away. There was a guy from Trinidad and Tobago who fell and hurt his knee. They gave him these rusty old crutches that were so bad he fell again.

So the mayor, captain, and warden, left us to clean the dorm. But a few minutes later, they came back and told us that a few of us had to go to the property room. When we exited the dormitory with them, there were 15 guards all dressed in black waiting for us. These were not normal uniforms- they looked like an emergency riot squad. The guards told us to turn around and they handcuffed our hands and shackled our feet. I asked them what was happening and where we were going, and they told us we were under investigation.

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They put us in the hole. They wouldn't take us out to the yard or let us talk to anyone. Eventually, they told me that I had been placed under investigation for talking to others about our complaints and our rights. I think I was targeted because I am perceived as a leader. Because I speak English better than most detainees, I get involved to help people translate and speak up for themselves.

Once other detainees saw that we were taken out of the dormitory and taken to the hole, they backed out and stopped the hunger strike and became afraid to continue documenting the human rights violations here. Other detainees were afraid to face the same retaliation. Because we were put in the hole, there are detainees who are now afraid to speak to attorneys or outside officials when they come to visit. They will suffer any abuse to avoid facing time in the hole. The jail made an example out of us so that others don't tell the truth about what is happening-- the bad conditions and the repressive environment.

The jail is trying to prevent the truth about what is happening from coming out. But the people who have a contract with this jail-- ICE and Homeland Security-- should know what is happening. The best thing they could do is close the jail because the conditions are not adequate for human beings, and the jail acts in a repressive way.

If I had the opportunity to I would like to meet Dr. Dora Schriro to tell her the reality here: when you ask for your most basic rights, instead of getting them, you are put in the hole. The small changes that are happening right now don't help us at all. They only help them to continue to hold on to their contract. That is why what we are doing and saying is important. No one can take away what we have lived through.

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Human Rights Monitor: Joaquin Pena Lopez

Dome and Cell: Bearcat 2

Date: 08/03/09

I, Joaquin Pena Lopez came to this jail on June 23, 2009.

When I first arrived the things that impacted me the most were the mosquitoes, rats, and roaches, as well as the rusted beds. The food was horrible and the calls were so expensive that many other detainees and I could not afford to call our families to even let them know where we were. The immigration officers rarely came and would not answer questions from detainees. There deportations were, and still are, very slow. There were many problems.

In our cell, we decided to make a list of the human rights problems and ask other detainees if they had the same experiences. Detainees in another cell went on hunger strike. I saw many guards and officials entering the cell and threatening them—they were told to end the hunger strike or they would be placed in the hole. Under these threats the detainees agreed with the jail staff that conditions would improve, and so they ended the strike. But the jail staff did not keep up its end of the agreements.

When jail staff saw that detainees in our cell were recording human rights violations, jail staff tried to separate us. They split us up and put us in different cells. But it didn't work. We kept our courage and continued monitoring the conditions.

One day, at approximately 10:00 in the morning, jail staff called my name and tricked me into going with them. They told me someone was there to visit me, but instead they handcuffed me and took me to the hole. They never told me why. After a day or two, an attorney from ICE interrogated me and told me I was under investigation for talking to other detainees about the hunger strike.

I was in the hole for seven days. The last day I was taken to the jail's internal "court" and told that the investigation was over. This "court" is just an internal process the jail has that permits them to keep a detainee in the hole for no reason.

In the hole, I spent an entire day with the room flooded with water and the toilet not working. It was extremely difficult. I was handcuffed at all times outside the cell, they never wash your clothes, and they give you the most minimum amount of toilet paper they can. I stopped eating for three days, and finally they released me from that hell. For me, it was humiliating and degrading-- the jail showed me that it has the power to take away my rights in retaliation for speaking the truth. When I was in the hole, even a guard told me that what is happening here is not right.

After I was retaliated against in this way, many detainees erased themselves from the list of our complaints and took back their grievances because they were so terrified. They did not want to end up in the hole.

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Everyone knows the jail will put you in the hole for any excuse, for example, failing to walk in a straight line, speaking Spanish, or asking for ice with meals. And the jail targets people who speak out about conditions. So detainees remain afraid. Whatever the guards say, most detainees agree with it. Anyone who speaks out does so very timidly.

Now, since the jail knows that someone from outside is going to come and inspect the jail, they are trying to fix everything. In the Eagle dome, for instance, the jail was repairing everything and putting in new beds. The kitchen is also being fixed up. And they are trying to “clean up the detainees” by taking people to the hole so that they do not talk. Right now, all of the rooms in the hole are full.

It is important for detainees to speak out because we need long term improvements. If everything here was good, the jail would have nothing to hide-- they wouldn't care if we go on hunger strike, or if reporters or attorneys come. But because they know that there are many problems, they try to hide them and repress them. Immigrants here should be treated with dignity and respect. We detainees should not be not put in the hole for asking for their rights. And when our cases are finished, we should be deported quickly. This may not help me, but it will help others in the future. This jail should be closed so that other jails see what happened and start changing and improve conditions.

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Human Rights Monitor: Oleg Semenov

Dome and Cell: Tiger 1

Date: 07/31/09

I was locked up in solitary confinement after meeting with a representative of the Workers' Center for the first time. I had put on my yarmulke, and the guard took that from me. I have been in solitary confinement for three days now. I was told I will be here for sixty (60) days. I am here because the jail perceives me to be a leader. In the past, I went on hunger strike when the jail refused to provide Kosher food. I have refused to eat.

In the hole, I can't make a phone call, I can't write a letter, and they don't even let me have my prayer book. Instead, they have brought me a copy of the New Testament. I told them respectfully, "this is not my religion, do you know what a Jew is?" The guards just told me that it was good enough.

So for asking to be able to worship my God and refusing to eat this food, I have been given a punishment of sixty days in the hole. They say that I asked a question to a guard too aggressively, but I know this is an excuse. I've seen guys in here cuss out guards and get ten days in solitary confinement for it, but for me, they give me sixty days for asking for Kosher food. They can put you in the hole here for anything or nothing-- I know another detainee named Alexander who was put in solitary confinement just for asking for another pair of underwear. For that, they punished him.

I don't know how long I'll be here. ICE says it can't deport me because my home country is refusing to accept me. I've been in ICE custody now for 90 days.

I've tried to ask the ICE deportation officer about the status of my case. He told me "it's not in my power to say." What kind of an answer is that? I tried to ask him a different way, and he got angry and told me to "show respect." So I just stopped talking to him and said ok. I already have 60 days in the hole- I'm not sure how many more I would survive.

At first, I was in detention in El Paso, Texas. There I could go to Jewish services and they provided me with Kosher food. Here, I'm in solitary confinement now because they don't want to deal with my questions. They interrogated me about whether I was helping plan another hunger strike.

People in this jail need to be educated about how to work with people from other countries. Their job is to work with immigrants, but they seem afraid of us. I don't think it's possible to fix all the problems in this jail-- they should close this jail or at least fire everyone here and start over.

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Human Rights Monitor: Jesse Ramirez Vazquez

Dome and Cell: Wolf 2

Date: 07/31/09

I've been in immigration detention for the last 30 days. ICE and the jail treat us like animals.

In this jail, they don't regularly provide the basic things you need- like a tooth brush and soap. The dorms are so filthy that when you walk in the smell almost knocks you down. It's not that we don't shower but the smell stays there—they don't give us deodorant, and they don't give us enough clean clothes. Everyone is sick in my cell. People have no shoes, and they are suffering of fever, and fungus and infections.

If you want to talk to your family you need a calling card but you can't buy one at the store. You have to order one and they take weeks to arrive. Then you buy a \$10.00 calling card and its' only enough to make one short call. If no one answers suddenly you only have three minutes left on your card.

Also when you arrive here they give you some tiny women's underwear. Some of this underwear is pink. I swear if you saw a man wearing these from behind you would think he was a woman. I thought that this underwear was at least free, but then I got some money in my account and they deducted the under wear price from it, three dollars a pair.

When the ICE officials come to the jail, they refuse to answer questions—they just say to write a request and then they ignore it.

In Wolf, the guards use the fire alarm to wake us in the morning. It's horrible and deafening. A few days ago, the guards set off the alarm and then demanded that we start cleaning the dorm. They refused. I hit the handle on the alarm with a broom. For that, I got 60 days in the hole. They had a jail "court", and the jail staff told me that if I didn't sign the form and say I was guilty, they would give me 120 days in the hole. So I signed whatever they gave me. I have never been in the hole before. But now I'm here because someone told the jail that we were working as human rights monitors to document the violations.

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Human Rights Monitor: Erik Morales

Dome and Cell: Wolf 2

Date: 07/31/09

I have been in here for sixty days, it is terrible here, and I have gone on hunger strike to protest these conditions.

I used to work construction in New Orleans. I was there during Hurricane Katrina-- I was in my building at 6:00 a.m. when it was flooded and destroyed. My friends and I climbed to the top floor, and I used my hammer to break through the roof and get us out. We waited on the roof and sixty-nine of us were finely rescued. Other died. It was terrible, and I thought it was the worst think I would face in my life. All I can say is that the fear I felt then was not as bad I how I feel now in this jail.

I was put in the hole because they accused me of kissing one of the guards. It's absurd. I am an old man and a Christian. I go to the church services. When they came for me to put me in solitary confinement, I was preparing to sing a hymn. This was on 7/23/09. They took me to a jail "court" and said that I was getting sixty days in lock down for kissing a guard. I've been in for twelve days now.

I don't know how long they will keep me in this frightful place. My deportation officer says he doesn't know when they will deport me. I was told I would be deported within a couple of weeks, but I'm still here. I pray every day.

Before I was here I was in detention in El Paso, Texas. That jail was closed down because the conditions were so bad. We did a hunger strike there too. I was one of the last people transferred out of that jail. Then ICE transferred me to Odessa, and then here.