

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20032

Mr. Caleb Vitello
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Vitello:

We write to express our profound concern regarding recent operations carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in New Jersey and Puerto Rico. Reports from media in both regions highlight reckless action by ICE Agents, which have caused considerable distress within communities. These actions have alarmingly sown fear among residents, disrupted businesses, and raised serious concerns about the behavior of federal agencies and the preservation of due process rights.

On January 23, 2025, ICE agents raided a small business in Newark, New Jersey. Reports indicate that agents detained community members including a U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican descent, a military veteran, without producing a warrant. Additionally, on January 26, 2025, ICE agents conducted an operation in the Barrio Obrero area of Santurce in San Juan, Puerto Rico. According to news reports, at least three individuals of Dominican origin were detained during this operation. Eyewitnesses observed agents questioning individuals in parts of the city with large number of Dominican community members, allegedly to verify their immigration status.

Given these reports, we have several pressing questions regarding the legal and procedural aspects of this operation, as well as concerns about the rights and well-being of those involved:

1. How many people were apprehended or detained during both ICE operations? What is the status of each individual, including whether they are facing deportation proceedings? Were any subjected to expedited or administrative removal?
2. Did ICE possess arrest warrants for those detained? How many were arrested without a warrant?
3. What was the rationale for questioning individuals at locations who were not identified as targets of the operation?
4. What criteria did ICE agents employ to identify individuals for questioning, and what methodology was used to target specific communities? Were factors such as race or ethnicity taken into account? For each individual questioned, please provide the rationale for their selection and indicate whether any prior intelligence informed the targeting of these communities. Bearing in mind that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, how many citizens or veterans were among those questioned or detained? What was the duration of their questioning or detention? What forms of identification are acceptable to ICE agents? Is a military identification card valid form to ICE Agents?
5. What measures does ICE take to ensure individuals with valid immigration documents or ongoing cases are not wrongfully detained? What efforts is your administration taking to limit disruptions to the community during enforcement actions?

The public deserves transparency and accountability from federal agencies operating within all communities. Given the significant disruption your recent operations has had on communities, and our concern for the well-being of those involved, we request a detailed response to the above questions by no later than February 3, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Pablo José Hernández", written over a horizontal line.

Pablo José Hernández
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Adriano Espaillat", written over a horizontal line.

Adriano Espaillat
Chairman
Congressional Hispanic Caucus