

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Secretary Noem:

We write to express our outrage regarding the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision to shut down key oversight offices responsible for ensuring civil rights and humane treatment of migrants in detention. The closure of these offices raises serious questions about DHS's transparency and compliance with the law, particularly as reports continue to surface detailing inhumane conditions at facilities like Krome Detention Center in Florida. We demand immediate action to restore oversight and halt the immoral mistreatment of detained individuals.

Recent reporting from the Miami Herald indicates that people detained at Krome have faced alarming conditions, including prolonged confinement in unsanitary environments, lack of medical care, overcrowding, and mistreatment by staff.¹ At least three deaths have occurred in ICE custody and several detained men and women and their families have alleged serious abuses. Immigration advocates have called it an "international human rights disaster." One detainee labeled Krome "a concentration camp."

Krome is overcrowded far beyond its capacity.² Advocates have alleged that ICE is underreporting the detained population in public data. As the Administration seeks to unlawfully terminate the legal status of over 1 million TPS and humanitarian parole recipients—all of whom were vetted by DHS upon entry or after applying for protections—conditions will likely worsen.

Rather than acting in response to dozens of complaints, reports, and lawsuits regarding inhumane conditions and civil rights violations at ICE detention facilities, the Administration has opted to cut off personnel and expertise tasked with ensuring medical, hygiene, mental health, and due process standards. On March 21, DHS effectively closed several oversight offices, the USCIS Ombudsman, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), and the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO).³ This will have impacts far beyond detention: it will cut off avenues for the public to file complaints about DHS policies and practices from airport screenings to ICE raids against schools, hospitals, and religious centers.

The elimination of oversight mechanisms leaves individuals detained at Krome and around the country without recourse, undermines transparency, and erodes public trust in the Department's ability to uphold basic human rights and responsibly manage billions of taxpayer dollars. This decision is particularly troubling given previous findings of abuse and neglect in DHS facilities, which underscore the necessity of independent oversight.

¹ <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/immigration/article302968939.html>

² <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management> [Data from 3/27/2025]

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/21/us/politics/trump-civil-rights-homeland-security-deportations.html>

DHS has an obligation to ensure that all individuals in its custody are treated with dignity in accordance with the law and that federal spending on private contracts receives appropriate oversight and monitoring. The removal of essential oversight functions—whose activities are mandated by Congress—defies this obligation and places vulnerable populations at even greater risk of abuse. Given these concerns, we request answers to the following questions:

1. What was the justification for shutting down oversight offices within DHS that Congress has tasked with ensuring humane conditions and compliance with civil rights laws at DHS detention facilities?
2. What specific legal authority has DHS claimed in effectively shutting down internal oversight functions and withholding information from Congress and the public?
3. How will funds appropriated by Congress for these offices be utilized going forward?
4. What steps, if any, has DHS taken to ensure accountability and oversight in the absence of these offices, particularly in detention contracts with private prison companies?
5. How does DHS plan to address the specific issues reported at Krome, including allegations of prolonged solitary confinement, overcrowding, physical abuse, and denial of medical treatment? Have additional medical staff or other personnel been surged to the facility considering reported overcrowding?
6. What actions have been taken by DHS or ICE officials to guarantee access to detained persons for their family members and legal counsel?
7. Has DHS conducted any internal reviews on the impact of reduced oversight on the conditions within detention centers? If so, what were the findings?

We demand you reverse this decision and provide Congress with a detailed plan for how DHS will restore humane conditions for detained migrants and provide transparency in detention operations. We look forward to your prompt response to these critical questions to ensure that the Trump Administration's immigration policy does not devolve further into callous cruelty.

Sincerely,

[[SIGNATURES]]