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## ICE Guards Accused Of Sexual Assault And Harassment At El Paso Detention Facility

By [MALLORY FALK \(/PEOPLE/MALLORY-FALK\)](#) • AUG 17, 2020

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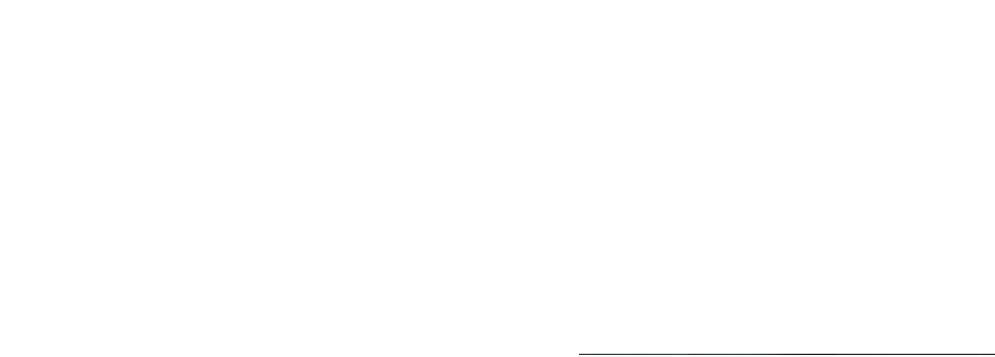
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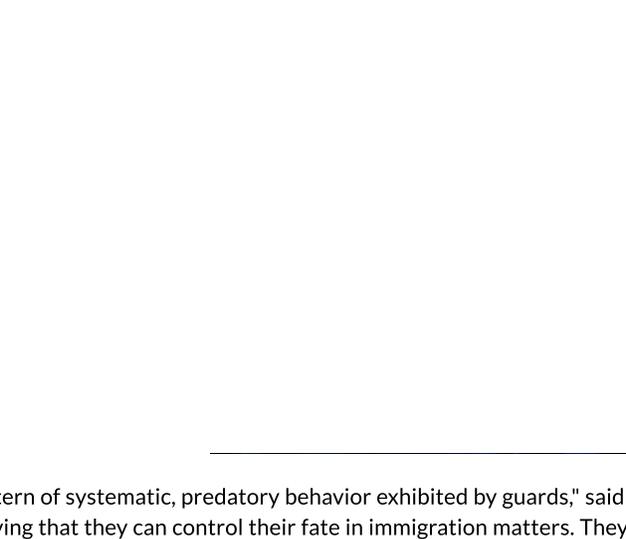
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*A delegation of House Democrats enter the El Paso Processing Center on Aug. 2, 2019, for a tour by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The facility drew attention this year after a group of hunger-striking immigrants were force-fed in January.*

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Three people detained at the El Paso Processing Center say they were sexually assaulted or harassed by guards, according to a new complaint from Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center.



"These victims provide a pattern of systematic, predatory behavior exhibited by guards," said attorney Linda Corchado. "These predators brainwash women into believing that they can control their fate in immigration matters. They tell women that they are powerless, that they have no rights, and that no one will believe them."

One woman, referred to in the complaint as Jane Doe 1, said two guards forcibly kissed her and touched intimate parts of her body on multiple occasions, out of view of security cameras.

When she told one guard to stop during an assault, he "reportedly told her that no one would believe her and that there was no evidence of the assault since he had assaulted her in a camera blind spot," according to the complaint.

Jane Doe 1 is still being held at the El Paso Processing Center.

Another woman, referred to as Jane Doe 2, said she was repeatedly sexually harassed by multiple officers.

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**One guard allegedly told a woman who was detained that he would get her clean uniforms and extra soap if she reconsidered his sexual advances.**

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He also told her he could pay her "a lot of money" if she engaged in sexual acts with him, the complaint said.

Jane Doe 2 was released from the detention facility in April. She said one guard sent her messages through other women after she left, continuing to seek sexual contact.

A male detainee, referred to as John Doe, said a guard stared at him and "began to repeatedly rub his genitals" while Doe showered. After reporting the incident, he was placed in solitary confinement, according to the complaint.

John Doe went on a hunger strike and was eventually transferred to the Otero County Processing Center in New Mexico.

Corchado is calling for an investigation into "this pattern and practice of sexual assault, harassment and retaliation." She filed the complaint with the El Paso County District Attorney, the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General and Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney said the office takes "allegations of misconduct by public officials extremely seriously" and has forwarded the complaint to "the appropriate investigative agencies."

DHS and the local district attorney's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a statement, an ICE spokesperson said the agency has "zero tolerance for any form of sexual abuse or assault against individuals in the agency's custody and takes very seriously all allegations of employee misconduct."

She said ICE is aware of the allegations and they will be investigated by the Office of Professional Responsibility and the Office of the Inspector General.

"Incidents of misconduct are treated with the utmost seriousness and investigated thoroughly," the spokesperson said. "When substantiated, appropriate action is taken."

These are not the first allegations of sexual abuse at an ICE detention facility. Nationally, 14,700 complaints alleging sexual or physical abuse were lodged against ICE from January 2010 to July 2016, according to a report ([https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/5a9da297419202ab8be09c92/1520280217559/SexualAssault\\_Compla](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/5a9da297419202ab8be09c92/1520280217559/SexualAssault_Compla)) from the advocacy group Freedom for Immigrants, which cited federal data.

Just a small fraction of those cases were investigated by the Office of Inspector General.

Earlier this year, a Mexican woman filed a federal lawsuit (<https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/politics/immigration/2020/05/28/370649/in-federal-suit-mexican-woman-says-she-and-two-others-were-raped-by-houston-immigration-officers-before-deportation/>) saying she was raped at a detention facility in Houston just hours before she was deported, and became pregnant as a result of the attack.

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