



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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CVT Calls for Immediate Investigation into New Reports of Gross Human Rights Abuses in ICE Detention

ST. PAUL, Minn. and WASHINGTON — The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) is horrified at recent allegations that women at the Irwin County Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Center in Ocilla, Georgia, are being subjected to sterilization procedures, unnecessarily and without their consent, in addition to other forms of gross medical neglect and related abuse. The claims—brought by a whistleblower, nurse Dawn Wooten, and several detained women—are especially distressing given the marginalized immigrant population against which they are reportedly being perpetrated, and the United States’ dark history of forced sterilization, particularly of women of color.

The allegations also implicate the United States’ obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The United Nations special rapporteur on torture has [made clear](#) that “medical treatments of an intrusive and irreversible nature, when lacking a therapeutic purpose, may constitute torture or ill-treatment when enforced or administered without the free and informed consent of the person concerned.... This is particularly the case when intrusive and irreversible, nonconsensual treatments are performed on patients from marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities, notwithstanding claims of good intentions or medical necessity.”

At CVT’s centers in the U.S., the vast majority of our clients fled persecution and torture in their home countries, escaping here to save their lives and their families. When they arrive, virtually all are detained in ICE facilities, where they are often made to endure unsanitary conditions, substandard medical care, forced isolation and excessive use of force. Since the pandemic struck, they’ve been exposed to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 virus, unchecked by proper health and safety precautions.

Respected local human rights organizations—including Project South, Georgia Detention Watch, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, and South Georgia Immigrant Support Network—have repeatedly and over many years documented these and other violations at Georgia’s immigration detention facilities, Irwin included. Mistreatment under the Trump administration has worsened still.

“Make no mistake,” said Curt Goering, CVT executive director, “these shocking allegations, and the lack of oversight they reveal, cannot be divorced from the president’s racist, deterrence-based immigration agenda, or the culture of impunity that his policies and rhetoric have unleashed.

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“The allegations must be investigated, thoroughly and impartially, including whistleblower protections for Ms. Wooten. Appropriate accountability must then follow, both institutional and individual. In the meantime, and without exception going forward, everyone detained at Irwin must be provided medical care that meets professional standards.”

CVT recently joined more than 170 of the nation’s leading immigration and advocacy organizations in releasing the 2021 Immigration Action Plan, a blueprint for transforming the U.S. immigration system through approaches centered on human dignity, family unity, community well-being and American prosperity. A pillar of this plan is to completely phase out incarceration in the civil immigration system.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit www.cvt.org.