



ICE in Our Court Threatens Public Safety, Disrupts Pursuit of Justice

As community partners, Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Safe Alliance work together every day to ensure the safety and rights of immigrants who are survivors of domestic violence.

Last week, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials entered the Mecklenburg County Courthouse to arrest a woman and her 16-year-old son, leaving her 2-year-old child behind in the court's day care center as they took her into ICE custody and placed her in removal proceedings. This woman and her son are survivors of domestic violence perpetrated by a U.S. citizen.

Our organizations are deeply concerned that the continued presence of ICE at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse will negatively impact the willingness to report the crime of domestic violence and threaten overall public safety in our community.

Many immigrant domestic violence survivors we assist have been abused, threatened, manipulated and controlled by an abusive partner as they have settled in the United States. Abusers often attempt to manipulate immigration officials and the courts, using these systems as a tool to further control and psychologically abuse their victim.

The survivors we work with often share stories of perpetrators who threaten to have them jailed or deported if they seek help. It's also common for perpetrators to fabricate criminal accusations against victims to maintain power and control over them and their children.

We are working with law enforcement and our courts to ensure abusers are not allowed to exercise these tactics and that immigrant victims of crime are able to pursue justice safely in Mecklenburg County.

Similar ICE arrests have increased in courts across the country over the last 18 months even though state supreme court justices have asked the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to end this practice, citing the U.S. Supreme Court's [description](#) of an individual's right to petition for redress of grievances in court as "among the most precious of the liberties safeguarded by the Bill of Rights ..."

Allowing ICE in our courts **deliberately threatens this right and our public safety**. The court cannot function if victims, witnesses, and criminal defendants risk deportation simply by coming to court.

Our courts can only serve our community effectively when individuals feel safe coming forward to seek help. The threat of ICE in the court has a chilling effect on immigrants, and its confirmed presence will certainly deter willingness to report crime, silencing survivors of abuse, disrupting the pursuit of justice in our courts and endangering public safety.

Imagine if a loved one couldn't report the crime of domestic violence or sexual assault because doing so would rip your family apart. No one should be forced to choose between these terrible options.

That is why Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy and Safe Alliance believe safety must be our community's top priority, and we will work together with our partners, advocating against ICE presence in our court.

