

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 24, 2020

The Honorable Tony H. Pham  
Acting Director  
Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
500 12th St., SW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Acting Director Pham:

We would like to follow up on two previous letters sent to your office by members of Congress in September pertaining to reports of the appalling conditions and practices at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Irwin County, Georgia, which were initially detailed in a whistleblower complaint and numerous media reports. As you know, the complaint suggested that there has been a, "... High rate of hysterectomies among migrant woman," who are detained in the Irwin County facility.<sup>1</sup> In light of recent corollary reporting, investigative efforts, and testimonials from women who were subjected to medical procedures by Dr. Mahendra Amin, we implore ICE to immediately close the Irwin County Detention Center, and we urge your agency to conduct a thorough review of the conditions at other contracted detention facilities to ensure these practices are not occurring elsewhere.

In the wake of the whistleblower complaint and a congressional visit to the facility, a group of preeminent medical professionals and Georgia-based advocates reviewed the medical records of dozens of patients who visited Dr. Amin. The experts' randomized, methodological review process identified a, "Pattern of overly aggressive, invasive, and unnecessary surgeries on women," who were detainees in the Irwin County Detention Center.<sup>2</sup> The experts have indicated that *at least 55* women were associated with this pattern under Dr. Amin's care – clear evidence that the issues in the facility go beyond the scope of the initial whistleblower complaint.

The medical experts' review of the records indicates that many of the women were not experiencing abdominal pain before visiting Dr. Amin. Moreover, the review shows that Dr. Amin was often citing insufficient—and potentially fabricated—medical factors to perform unnecessary surgeries on female detainees, many of whom are still trying to either determine what was done to them, or now require corrective procedures. Furthermore, in our continued work with detainees and their representatives, we have learned of other horrific conditions and

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<sup>1</sup> Paul, K. (2020, September 15). Ice detainees faced medical neglect and hysterectomies; whistleblower alleges. Retrieved September 15, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/sep/14/ice-detainees-hysterectomies-medical-neglect-irwin-georgia>

<sup>2</sup> O'Toole, M. (2020, October 23). 19 women allege medical abuse in Georgia immigration detention. Retrieved October 23, 2020, from <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-10-22/women-allege-medical-abuse-georgia-immigration-detention>

actions taken at this contracted facility. Other medical conditions requiring immediate attention have been neglected and detainees have at times been misled to sign release forms that they do not understand, which state that they do not want to receive medical attention. There have also been reports of unfair retaliation against detainees for trying to report the need for medical attention to a fellow detainee.

While we are appreciative that the department initiated an internal investigation into the allegations laid out in the initial whistleblower complaint, we are deeply concerned that dozens of women who visited Dr. Amin have not been interviewed as a part of this investigation or were hastily and inexplicably deported out of the country. And that other women have been subjected to retaliatory actions for sharing their experience with Dr. Amin. This challenges the internal investigators' ability to conduct a comprehensive review of the initial whistleblower complaint and Dr. Amin's conduct. Perhaps more importantly, it reinforces the heart-wrenching pleas of current detainees who have shared how traumatized, frightened, and in-danger they feel at the Irwin County Detention Center.

In short, we believe this contractor and this facility have no business continuing their operations. Accordingly, we reiterate our firm belief that ICE must immediately close the Irwin County Detention Center and that those in custody must be released on bond while their immigration cases are adjudicated. Also, we urge the agency to reorient its investigation so that the total body of harm caused by medical personnel at the Irwin County Detention Center, including Dr. Amin, is fully understood and structural changes are carried out to ensure such a situation never occurs again. Finally, we strongly encourage ICE to investigate all detention facilities to ensure the adequate and humane treatment of detainees.

Sincerely,



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress