

## Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/its-time-dhs-cut-ties-profit-prisons>

### Campaign and Advocacy

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Following the release of a [report](#) that showed how dangerous and mismanaged private prisons are, the Department of Justice [announced](#) that the Bureau of Prisons would stop using them for federal prisoners. This was a big step in the right direction and celebrated by advocates who have diligently worked against prison privatization. Shortly after, the Department of Homeland Security began its own review of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency's detention policy, which overwhelmingly relies on private prisons. DHS is now seeking to contract with the infamous private prison company CoreCivic (formerly Corrections Corporation of America) at the Northeast Ohio Correctional Center in Youngstown. The DHS intends to detain immigrants in the private prison while it is in the midst of reviewing this very practice.

**In 2014, the DOJ found that the Northeast Ohio Correctional Center was not fit to house federal prisoners and declined to renew its contract with CoreCivic.**

#### Detention of Immigrants is Out of Control

The detention and deportation of immigrants has [skyrocketed under the Obama administration](#) and ICE has turned to the private prison system to house this influx of detainees. ICE now detains roughly 45,000 immigrants daily, a staggering number when compared to the 8,000 detainees held daily in 1995. Only last year the number was below 30,000 and this trend means that for more and more immigrants, their first experience is imprisonment.

The DHS does not seem to have any immediate plans to address this issue. In fact, it is openly promoting it and recently authorized ICE to contract for more beds. To further exacerbate this problem, President-elect Donald Trump plans to detain and deport 3 million immigrants immediately upon taking office, though he has not explained how he will accomplish this or where these people will be housed. One thing is certain: his plan is welcomed by the private prison industry. CoreCivic's stock price has jumped nearly 50% in the week following the election.

#### Private Prisons are Never the Answer

Roughly 73% of asylum seekers and immigrants detained by ICE are being housed in private prisons operated by the same corporations the DOJ declared too great a risk to prisoners' rights and safety. Because private prisons are free from the oversight and transparency under which federal and state prisons operate, prisoners and immigrants at these facilities are subject to a higher risk of violence, sexual assault, and a lack of medical care. The DOJ recognized the risk, and the DHS should follow suit.

**The DOJ is able to cut ties with private prisons because of criminal justice reform aimed to decrease mass incarceration. Meanwhile, DHS has ignored opportunities to reform and has drastically increased its use of detention.**

The majority of the individuals held in detention do not have criminal backgrounds and yet they find themselves imprisoned. Many are immigrant families and asylum seekers escaping poverty and violence in hope of finding peace and safety. The history of the United States is, in part, a history of immigrants, and we are all familiar with the notion of the Statue of Liberty welcoming the huddled masses yearning to breathe free. For over two centuries people have flocked to America's safety and liberty, but now many of these people find themselves detained and imprisoned when they reach our shores and borders. Simply put, ICE's reliance on detention is lining the pockets of profiteering prison corporations such as CoreCivic and while making Ohio complicit in human rights abuse.

#### We Must Stop Incentivizing Mass Incarceration and Detention

Supporting CoreCivic and other private prison corporations incentivizes mass incarceration and the mass detention of immigrants. Such a for-profit incentive has no place in either our prison or immigration systems, and it is a step in the wrong direction for Ohio. In order to ensure the safety and rights of immigrants, the DHS must find alternatives to detention and cease all use of private, for-profit prisons and detention centers. We need less private prisons in Ohio, not more. The DOJ is ending its use of private prisons and it is time for Ohio and DHS to follow suit.

The ACLU of Ohio sent a [letter to DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson](#) urging him to end the use of private prisons as detention centers. Help us stop another prison for profit in Ohio by urging your local legislators to prevent the Youngstown prison from becoming an ICE detention center.

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