

# Florida officials deny accusations of inhumane conditions at Alligator Alcatraz

Cuban reggaeton artist Leamsy La Figura, arrested last week in Miami-Dade on assault charges, was transferred to South Florida's new immigration detention facility known as Alligator Alcatraz in the Everglades, the singer confirmed in a phone call.

He and other detainees claim they are enduring inhumane conditions at the site, including lack of access to water, inadequate food and denial of religious rights.

Alligator Alcatraz was built in a matter of days on a rarely used municipal airport located about 50 miles west of the City of Miami. The first group of detainees arrived at the center on July 3, according to state Attorney General James Uthmeier.

La Figura, whose real name is Leamsy Isquierdo, was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and battery. He was initially held at the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center (TGK) before being transferred to Alligator Alcatraz.

**"There's no water to take a bath"**

In a phone call from inside the facility, La Figura described what he called horrific conditions.

"I am Leamsy La Figura. We've been here at Alcatraz since Friday. There's over 400 people here. There's no water to take a bath, it's been four days since I've taken a bath," he said.

He claimed the food at the immigration facility is scarce and unsanitary.

"They only brought a meal once a day and it had maggots. They never take off the lights for 24 hours. The mosquitoes are as big as elephants," La Figura said.

### **Detainees say rights are being violated**

Other detainees echoed La Figura's concerns, alleging violations of their basic rights.

"They're not respecting our human rights," one man said during the same call. "We're human beings; we're not dogs. We're like rats in an experiment."

"I don't know their motive for doing this, if it's a form of torture. A lot of us have our residency documents and we don't understand why we're here," he added.

A third detainee, who said he is Colombian, described deteriorating mental health and lack of access to necessary medical care.

"I'm on the edge of losing my mind. I've gone three days without taking my medicine," he said. "It's impossible to sleep with this white light that's on all day."

He also claimed his Bible was confiscated.

"They took the Bible I had and they said here there is no right to religion. And my Bible is the one thing that keeps my faith, and now I'm losing my faith," he said.

La Figura's girlfriend said the couple shares a 4-year-old daughter.

## **Florida officials respond to inhumane conditions allegations**

On Tuesday, state officials responded to the allegations made by detainees at the facility, saying they are "completely false."

"The reporting on the conditions in the facility is completely false. The facility meets all required standards and is in good working order," said Stephanie Hartman, director of communications for the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

FDEM was the engine behind Alligator Alcatraz, using the state's emergency management tools and funding to build, staff and operate the detention facility.

The detention has faced intense criticism over human rights, environmental impact, oversight and the legality of commandeering protected Everglades land.