

A NATION CHALLENGED: DETAINEES; Civil Rights Groups Allowed to Visit Two Jails in New Jersey

The New York Times

February 8, 2002 Friday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2002 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 1; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 11

Length: 415 words

Byline: By CHRISTOPHER DREW

Body

After repeated complaints from civil rights organizations, the Immigration and Naturalization Service allowed several of the groups into two jails in New Jersey this week to talk to foreigners detained as a result of investigations into terrorism.

The I.N.S. has said it is holding 460 such people nationwide, with two of the largest clusters in Hudson and Passaic Counties, in New Jersey. Many are Arabs or Muslims who were picked up for questioning on immigration violations and are awaiting deportation.

Jail officials have let personal lawyers, family members and friends visit some of the detainees. But they had not previously given access to an array of civil rights groups, some of which have filed suits to try to penetrate the secrecy surrounding the detentions.

"Generally, we were pleased that the I.N.S. allowed us to visit," said Allyson Collins, an associate director at Human Rights Watch in Washington.

Representatives of the groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International USA, visited the Hudson and Passaic County jails on Wednesday. Immigration officials in Newark took journalists on a tour of the Hudson County jail yesterday but would not allow interviews with any detainees.

The civil rights advocates described conditions at the Hudson County jail, a six-story concrete block building, as reasonably good. They said they were shown only small parts of the Passaic jail.

The Hudson County jail's director, Ralph Green, told reporters that the detainees lived apart from inmates held on state criminal charges, though the two groups attend prayer services and educational classes together.

The I.N.S. pays the jail \$77 a day to house each of the detainees. About two dozen of them lingered in a common area yesterday morning, watching television and talking at tables with stainless-steel tops.

The jail employs a Muslim imam, or spiritual leader, and provides for daily prayers. But some inmates have complained that they had trouble arranging a group prayer service during Ramadan last year.

Many of the detainees in the New Jersey jails were originally stopped for minor problems, like traffic violations, or because neighbors viewed them as suspicious. In most cases, lawyers say, local F.B.I. agents quickly determined that they were not involved in the Sept. 11 terror attacks. But F.B.I. officials in Washington and overseas have been checking to make sure the detainees have no other ties to terrorism before sending them home.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (93%); IMMIGRATION (92%); CIVIL RIGHTS (91%); CORRECTIONS (91%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); CORRECTIONS WORKERS (90%); POLITICAL DETAINEES (90%); HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (90%); PRISONS (90%); INVESTIGATIONS (90%); MUSLIMS & ISLAM (89%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (89%); TERRORISM (89%); PRISONERS (89%); SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE FORCES (89%); DEPORTATION (78%); HUMAN RIGHTS (78%); IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); LAWYERS (78%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (78%); INTERROGATION OF SUSPECTS (77%); SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK (77%); RAMADAN (76%); RELIGION (76%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (73%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (72%); JOURNALISM (72%); COUNTERTERRORISM (72%); CRIMINAL OFFENSES (71%); VEHICULAR OFFENSES (71%); WRITERS (67%)

Organization: AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (83%); AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (83%); HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (56%); IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE; AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION; AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Industry: LAWYERS (78%); WRITERS (67%)

Person: DREW, CHRISTOPHER

Geographic: NEWARK, NJ, USA (73%); NEW JERSEY, USA (94%); UNITED STATES (94%); NEW YORK CITY; WASHINGTON (DC); NEW JERSEY

Load-Date: February 8, 2002