



USA: Free transgender asylum seeker

To: ICE El Paso Field Office Director Diane Witte,

Alejandra, a 43-year-old, transgender activist, fled El Salvador after being abused by criminal gangs and the military because of her gender identity. She has been in US immigration detention receiving inadequate medical care since November 2017. **We urge you to grant humanitarian parole to Alejandra while her asylum claim is processed, and improve medical care at immigration detention facilities.**



For more information on this petition please contact: jhansen@amnesty.ca

Sincerely,

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Free Alejandra and other transgender asylum seekers in the United States

Alejandra, a 43-year old activist, spent more than a decade advocating for transgender rights in El Salvador. She was forced to flee El Salvador after repeated attacks and extortion by a criminal gang, as well as abuses by the Salvadoran military. Alejandra was sexually assaulted by both gang members and military personal because of her gender identity.

Alejandra requested asylum at the US-Mexico border in November 2017. But instead of offering her safety and a chance to rebuild her life, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authority is holding her in detention at the Cibola County Correctional Centre in New Mexico, while she waits for a judge's decision on her asylum claim.

Alejandra's niece's asylum claim was accepted. If released on parole, Alejandra told Amnesty International that, "First I want to go run and hug my niece. We would like to live together."

Both Alejandra and her niece reported receiving inadequate medical care at the Cibola detention facility.

Alejandra's situation is not unique. Many more trans women seeking asylum in the US are stuck waiting for months in detention centers where they are at risk of ill-treatment because of their gender identity, medical needs, or the trauma they have endured. Transgender detainees are sometimes subject to physical, verbal, and sexual violence; threats and intimidation; and misgendering. In addition, transgender individuals might not be housed in gender-appropriate cells, or subject to solitary cells against their will.

It is cruel and unnecessary for US immigration authorities to detain people fleeing to the US in search of safety from persecution and violence. Seeking asylum is a human right, and detention of asylum seekers should only be a last resort. There is no reason why women like Alejandra, who are seeking protection, should be jailed and denied their freedom simply for seeking safety in the US.

Amnesty International is calling on ICE El Paso Field Office Director Dianne Witte to:

- **Immediately grant Alejandra humanitarian parole while she awaits the decision on her asylum claim, including on any appeal;**
- **Improve the quality of medical care provided at ICE's privately-operated Cibola detention facility, especially for those living with HIV; and**
- **Grant humanitarian parole to all asylum seekers whenever possible, especially when they are LGBTI or have acute medical needs.**

Further reading: *"No Safe Space," Guatemalans and Hondurans seeking asylum in Mexico based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity*