

Trump administration continues torment of El Gamal family as detained mother remains in severe pain

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Hayam El Gamal, the Egyptian mother of five imprisoned with her children at the Dilley Immigration Processing Center in Texas for over 300 days, was rushed to the emergency room earlier this month after repeated pleas for medical care were ignored or denied by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the staff of CoreCivic, which runs the prison. More than a week later, despite findings that she has an unknown mass in her chest, fluid near her heart and worsening pain, El Gamal is still being denied access to the outside diagnostic treatment doctors said she urgently needs.

According to court filings submitted by her attorney, Eric Lee, and reporting by NBC News, El Gamal was rushed to the emergency room earlier this month after weeks of complaints about a painful growth in her chest were brushed aside by ICE and CoreCivic officials at Dilley. Three doctors who reviewed her records concluded that ICE and CoreCivic were “systematically denying Ms. El Gamal medical care” and that the neglect posed an urgent threat to her health and potentially her life.

El Gamal’s case has become a concentrated exposure of the barbarity of family detention in the United States. As Lee and other attorneys have reported, she repeatedly sought treatment for weeks as her pain worsened. After she was finally transported to an emergency room, doctors found that the supposed “lump” was not a bone, as detention staff had claimed, and that imaging showed fluid around her heart.

Even then, the follow-up testing doctors recommended was denied, and she was sent back to Dilley still without answers and still in pain. In an update shared by Lee a week after the hospitalization, El Gamal reported that ICE was still refusing to allow her to see an outside doctor for the additional diagnostic work that could determine the cause of the chest mass, the fluid near her heart, the rashes and the escalating pain.

The El Gamal family has effectively been imprisoned since June 2025, when federal agents detained Hayam El Gamal and her five children after her then-husband, Mohamed Sabry Soliman, was accused of carrying out a firebomb attack on a pro-Israel demonstration in Boulder, Colorado. From the outset, the Trump administration treated the family not as individuals with legal rights, but as targets for retaliation. Following the attack, the official White House account posted Soliman’s mugshot alongside video of the attack and gloated: “Six One-Way Tickets for Mohamed’s Wife and Five Kids. Final Boarding Call Coming

Soon. ??”

The persecution of the El Gamal family has nothing to do with public safety. An immigration judge ordered the family released on a \$15,000 bond last September, citing their lack of any criminal record, their cooperation with law enforcement and strong community support. In court, the FBI confirmed that the family “had no inkling at all” of Soliman’s planned attack. Yet ICE invoked an automatic stay to block their release, and the administration later used additional procedural maneuvers to keep the family jailed while undermining their asylum claims. Hayam El Gamal has since divorced Soliman, but she and her children remain imprisoned.

As Eric Lee, one of the family’s attorneys, told the *World Socialist Web Site* last year, “The Trump administration’s vindictive attack on this young family echoes the methods of Nazi Germany, where authorities used kin punishment—Sippenhaft—to intimidate the population.” That assessment has been borne out by the government’s conduct ever since. The continued detention of Hayam and her children, despite the absence of any evidence implicating them in Soliman’s actions, is a campaign of deliberate state persecution, aimed at terrorizing an immigrant family through indefinite confinement, medical neglect and psychological torture.

The government’s claim that the family is a “flight risk” is as threadbare as it is vindictive. According to Lee, the family even offered to submit to ankle monitors and daily ICE check-ins, including for the younger children, in order to address any supposed concern about supervision. ICE still refused release.

The prolonged detention has produced a broader physical and psychological breakdown throughout the family. In a recent phone interview with Scripps, Habiba Soliman, Hayam’s oldest daughter said, “It is too much... I feel like I’m living in a nightmare, and it just can’t be true.”

“We unfortunately happen to be the family of somebody who committed a criminal act. I know what he did is awful. We didn’t know anything. Our whole life destroyed in seconds.”

The *Houston Chronicle* reported Lee’s warning, “Every week they get worse,” and that he fears the children are suicide risks, saying they tell him, “they don’t want to be alive” and “wish they were dead.”

Ahead of a protest scheduled for Saturday outside the Dilley detention facility, Hayam El Gamal, speaking through her attorney

Lee, appealed for the release of her family and all those still imprisoned there. “I am a mother with five children who has been detained behind the gates of Dilley for over 10 months,” she said. “My kids, two of whom are 5 years old, have been struggling to live in a place that isn’t suitable for such long periods of time. We have been suffering from terrible food, inhuman living conditions and medical neglect for almost a year.”

El Gamal then described in her own words the systematic denial of medical care that culminated in her emergency hospitalization. “I have a weird bump in my chest that has been causing me pain for over three months. I do not know what it is and it’s causing me stress and anxiety,” she said. “I have been begging them to tell me what’s wrong with me.” She explained that despite her family’s history of cancer and her repeated appeals for help, “all I was given was ibuprofen and painkillers for almost three months.” No meaningful tests were performed, she said, until the pain became “unbearable” and she had to be taken to the ER. Even afterward, although hospital doctors determined that she needed to see specialists and undergo more testing, “I am still detained, with pain that is worsening everyday while no one cares at all.”

She concluded, “This place is a prison. We didn’t do anything to deserve this. Children shouldn’t be punished for their parents’ actions. Please treat us as an innocent family. We will follow the law just as we have been doing our entire lives. We are asking for only one thing: our freedom. Freedom is a human right, and we are begging you to help us gain ours back.”

What is happening to the El Gamals is not an aberration but an extreme expression of a broader policy. The Marshall Project reported this month that ICE has detained more than 6,200 children during Trump’s second term. By the end of the Biden administration, the daily average was 24 children in custody. After Trump revived family detention, that figure jumped tenfold to a daily average of 226. The same report found that the number of children in ICE custody rose to more than 550 on a single day in January before later declining. Nearly half of the children detained during the Trump term have been held at Dilley.

The conditions described at Dilley expose the lie that family detention can be made humane. The Marshall Project reported that families at the facility have lodged more than 700 complaints over medical care, and court filings cited by the outlet describe cases including a baby sent to the hospital with dangerously low oxygen levels, children in severe mental distress and a 13-year-old placed in isolation after a suicide attempt. Government filings claimed that between November and February no detainees required hospitalization or emergency-room referral, but The Marshall Project obtained 911 calls indicating repeated hospital transfers.

Medical and pediatric authorities have for years warned that detention itself is harmful to children. The American Academy of Pediatrics has said that no child should be in detention, and that even short periods of detention or family separation can cause psychological trauma and long-term mental health problems. Its earlier policy statement on immigrant children argued that children seeking safety should never be placed in detention facilities at all.

At the same time that children and parents are being warehoused in for-profit concentration camps, the state is funneling immense

resources into expanding the apparatus responsible. An Associated Press investigation published this week found that some newly hired ICE officers began work before passing full background checks and had troubling histories, including bankruptcies, misconduct allegations and unstable employment records. AP identified one new hire with two bankruptcies and six law-enforcement jobs in three years, another who had been accused of lying in a police report in a case that ended in a \$75,000 settlement, and a third who had failed to complete a police academy and then lasted only three weeks in his sole policing job. DHS acknowledged to AP that some applicants received offers and began work on a temporary basis before full background checks were completed.

This hiring spree is being financed by a staggering infusion of money. ICE received a \$75 billion windfall from Congress last year, tied to the administration’s mass deportation drive, and that the agency added 12,000 officers and agents in the push to double its force.

The torture of the El Gamal family is a warning. What the American state is doing to Hayam El Gamal and her children today, it will do to others tomorrow, regardless of immigration status. A government that claims the power to imprison children, deny a mother urgent medical care, override court rulings and inflict collective punishment on a family that committed no crime is asserting powers that will be used ever more broadly against the entire working class.

The same capitalist state that is building up ICE, expanding detention camps and hiring thugs to carry out mass deportations is also preparing for far wider confrontations with workers and youth. The trampling of immigrants’ rights is the spearhead of a general assault on democratic rights. This is why the fight to free the El Gamal family is not simply an immigration issue. It is a class issue and a democratic issue. The same government that is pouring billions into ICE and detention is preparing the machinery of repression for use against the entire working class. The defense of Hayam El Gamal and her children must become part of a broader struggle to abolish ICE, shut down the camps and put an end to the capitalist system that breeds dictatorship, fascism and war.



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