

El Gamal family released from Dilley concentration camp: A victory in the fight against collective punishment

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24 April 2026

A federal court order releasing Hayam El Gamal and her five children from the Dilley family detention center in South Texas is a significant victory for democratic rights and a defeat for the Trump administration's campaign of collective family punishment.

But it is a victory in a single battle. The war on immigrants, and through them on the democratic rights of the entire working class, continues and is escalating, and the El Gamal family, including four minor children, remains under threat.

On Thursday, U.S. District Judge Fred Biery of the Western District of Texas ordered Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to immediately release the family after nearly 10 months of imprisonment and seven months after a judge earlier ordered them released on bond. Hayam El Gamal and her 18-year-old daughter Habiba were ordered to wear electronic monitors.

The order followed an emergency hearing Thursday argued by Christopher Godshall-Bennett, an attorney for the family. Attorneys Eric Lee, Rebecca Webber and Niels Frenzen were among those who submitted the filings and argued for the family's release. Following the ruling, Godshall-Bennett wrote on social media, "Heading home from Texas after the triumph of our family over the admin. The Dilley concentration camp remains full of children living in shipping containers. Release every single one and close that hell hole immediately."

The *Texas Tribune* reported that the family was believed to have suffered the longest detention in the history of the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, the only federal immigration facility authorized to hold parents with their children.

The family had been held since June 2025, after ICE thugs seized them two days after the June 1, 2025 Boulder, Colorado, firebombing attack for which Hayam's estranged husband, Mohamed Sabry Soliman, was arrested. None of the six family members has been charged with any crime,

and El Gamal has divorced Soliman and condemned the attack. The FBI confirmed that none of the family members had advanced knowledge of the attack.

The family's innocence did not stop Stephen Miller and the Trump administration from punishing them. The El Gamal case was intended to establish the principle of collective punishment: that relatives of those the state labels "enemies" can be seized, imprisoned and deported without charge or trial.

At the outset of the case, Eric Lee, one of the family's attorneys, told the *World Socialist Web Site*: "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."

The release order has not ended the administration's campaign against the family. Attorney Niels Frenzen of the USC Gould School of Law Immigration Clinic warned after the ruling: "This release order is long overdue. But the Administration's efforts to deport the family continue, so their ordeal is not over yet."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) responded to the ruling by denouncing Judge Biery as an "activist judge." Lauren Bis, a DHS spokesperson, accused Biery of "releasing this terrorist's family onto American streets," publicly branding four children, ages five to 16, as "terrorists." Bis added that DHS "will continue to fight for the removal of those who have no right to be in our country, especially national security threats."

The conditions the El Gamal family endured at Dilley are part of a wider atrocity. Human Rights First and RAICES (Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services) reported this month that more than 5,600 people, including parents, children, toddlers and newborn babies, were imprisoned at Dilley between April 2025 and February 2026. The report found "pervasive and systemic" abuse and that families are "routinely threatened with or subjected to

separation to coerce them into abandoning asylum claims.”

The report documented inhumane conditions, due process violations and lasting physical and psychological harm to families and children, including inadequate access to food, water, hygiene and basic medical care. Families reported foul-smelling and unclean water, dirty water barrels and mold. Parents also reported undercooked meat, hair, worms, bugs, dead flies and foreign objects in meals. The concentration camp was the site of a measles outbreak earlier this year.

El Gamal was rushed to the ER this month after her urgent requests for medical care were ignored. A CT scan revealed an unexplained chest lump and fluid around her heart, but ICE then denied the doctor-recommended ultrasound for follow-up. Her 16-year-old son also suffered acute appendicitis after detention staff refused treatment beyond Tylenol.

In heartbreaking letters, El Gamal’s children described their imprisonment in writing as “slowly killing us on the inside.” The younger children drew pictures pining to go “home” and to “school.”

The El Gamal family’s targeting was driven from the White House. On May 21, 2025, 11 days before the Boulder attack, Miller summoned senior ICE officials and demanded a sharp escalation of arrests and deportations under threat of dismissal. The administration has pushed quotas of 3,000 arrests per day, while DHS social media has floated deporting “100 million” people.

What is being tested on immigrants is being prepared for the entire population. Federal troops have been deployed against peaceful protesters in American cities. Immigration Gestapo have killed US citizens, including Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. Administrative subpoenas are being used to compile dossiers on students, healthcare workers and social media users who speak out against the raids.

The *New York Times* reported Thursday that the Justice Department has identified 384 foreign-born US citizens whose citizenship it wants to revoke, part of a broader push to accelerate denaturalization cases through dozens of US attorney’s offices. A top Justice Department official described the 384 people as the “first wave of cases” in a “White House initiative.”

The conspiracy for dictatorship is unfolding in real time. The defense of immigrants is inseparable from the defense of democratic rights for the entire working class. Immigrant workers are not a separate population. They are part of the international working class confronting the same program of austerity, war and authoritarianism.

The Democratic Party will not defend the rights of immigrants or oppose the broader assault on democratic

rights. The Dilley facility was opened under Obama. In response to mass protests and calls for a general strike in Minnesota following the murders of Good and Pretti, the Democrats deepened their coordination with the ICE and CBP (Customs and Border Protection) through local and state police. Their response to the imprisonment of five children and ongoing daily injustices committed by ICE has consisted chiefly of press statements.

The Democrats have ceased fighting ICE deployments at airports, a test run for deploying immigration police at polling stations. By agreeing to DHS funding in March, they have paved the way for the current Republican reconciliation package, which would entrench ICE and CBP funding and expansion through Trump’s presidency.

The El Gamal family’s freedom was won through sustained legal and public struggle, including by the family itself, whose letters and public statements from detention, combined with the efforts of their attorneys and supporters, mobilized broader support. Protests were held outside the Dilley facility and in Colorado demanding the family’s return home and the closure of the concentration camp.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers to demand the immediate end to all proceedings against Hayam El Gamal and her children, the removal of the electronic monitoring imposed on Hayam and Habiba, and a guarantee that the family will not be re-detained or deported. The Dilley detention center must be closed, and every child and parent still imprisoned must be released, along with an end to family separations, mass raids and the use of detention and deportation as instruments of political terror.

The defense of immigrants is inseparable from the defense of democratic rights for the entire working class—against political surveillance, denaturalization, and the normalization of armed immigration forces in cities, workplaces and airports. What is required is the independent political mobilization of workers, native-born and immigrant alike, against both parties and the capitalist system they defend—a system that imprisons children, wages illegal wars abroad and diverts the wealth produced by society into repression and destruction.



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