

Emilson Aguilar Punay from Guatemala, Formerly Detained in Phoenix, AZ ([The Hill](#))



Edmilson, 16 from Guatemala, crossed the US-Mexico border illegally in May 2018 to reach his mother and siblings in Cincinnati. He described being held with about 30 young men and boys in an "office sized" cell, saying through an interpreter that he was packed into the windowless room for two days. The cell, he said, had a single toilet.

"The smell was very bad. It wasn't even separated by a wall," Edmilson said. "They said we had air conditioning, [but] it was very hot in the room."

He said the cell was so crowded that he could not lie down at times. Edmilson said he can still remember the sounds of young children — some as young as five — crying and screaming for their parents, from whom they had been separated.

"You could just hear cellphones ringing and children crying," he said. "Where there were small children, you could hear them crying all the time."

Edmilson said that he did not know whether it was night or day, and that the detainees were fed "sugary fruit juice and undercooked pre-packaged containers of chicken soup."

After two days and two nights in the crowded cell, he was transferred to a Phoenix detention center, where he was given fresh clothes and allowed to shower.

He was then transferred again to New York, where he spent another three weeks in a detention center about 25 miles from New York City before being flown to Cincinnati, where his mother and sisters live.

Rafael and Kimberly Martinez from Honduras, Formerly Detained in McAllen, TX ([The Guardian](#))

This is the account of Rafael and Kimberly Martinez, who, with their three-year-old daughter, had made the dangerous trek from their home on the Caribbean coast of Honduras to the US border to ask for political asylum... after Rafael's father, sister and brother-in-law were killed by local gangs and word went out that they were after him too.

“The conditions were horrible, everything was filthy and there was no air circulating,” Kimberly Martinez said of the five days the family spent cooped up in one facility they – like tens of thousands before them – referred to as “la hielera”: the icebox. Her husband added: “It’s as though they wanted to drain every positive feeling out of us.”

They knew, from following the news, that their ordeal of escaping gang violence back home and trekking across desert terrain at the height of summer would not end when they reached the United States.

What they did not expect, though, were days of hunger, separation and verbal abuse that they said they endured at the hands of federal immigration officials.

All they were given to eat, they said, were half-frozen bologna sandwiches, served at ten in the morning, five in the afternoon and two in the morning, and single sugar cookies for their daughter. What water they were given had a strong chlorine taste – a common complaint – and upset their stomachs.

If they talked too loudly, or if children were crying, the guards would threaten to turn the air temperature down further. When the Martinezes gathered with fellow detainees to sing hymns and lift their spirits a little, the guards would taunt them, or ask aggressively: “Why did you bother coming here? Why didn’t you stay in your country?”

“Many of these agents were Latinos, like us, but they were people without morals,” Rafael Martinez said, his voice choking with tears. “There we were, caged up like animals, and they were laughing at us.”

When three-year-old Jenny Martinez came down with a bad case of the flu, she and her mother were taken to a hospital where, they said, they were left waiting for hours with nowhere to sit or lie down, and no blankets, before receiving medication. Back in the detention facility, they were put in isolation and even Rafael was denied access to them.

Kimberly noticed that her daughter, like many of the detainees, was growing more jaundiced by the day for lack of vitamins or fresh air or sunshine. The toilets were filthy – with no seat covers and no toilet paper – and Kimberly observed that staff members did not throw out the crinkly blankets when detainees were moved or released; they simply passed them along to new arrivals.

Daise, M. from Honduras, Currently Detained in Dilley, TX **(*Plaintiffs v. Sessions*)**

My sixteen-year-old daughter and I are from Honduras. I left my country because my life had been threatened and I had been held up at gunpoint three times. We presented ourselves at the border about eight days ago, on June 21, 2018. We were taken to the Customs and Border Patrol Facility in McAllen, Texas, which we call the Ice Box.

After about one day, my daughter and I were taken to another facility, known as the Dog House, where we were held for four days. We were immediately separated at the Dog House and stayed separated the entire time. We were allowed to talk to each other only once for ten minutes in the three days we were there.

My daughter was very frightened and depressed the entire time. She is still depressed and has nightmares and a lot of anxiety because of the separation.

The female guards yelled at my daughter a lot, called her names and made fun of her and the other children. The female guards would not let her sleep and kicked her to keep her awake. They also called the children filthy and told them not to throw anything on the floor the way they would at home in their country. They made my daughter and the other girls strip naked in front of them and ogled the girls before their showers. My daughter was scared of the guards, because they were really angry all the time.

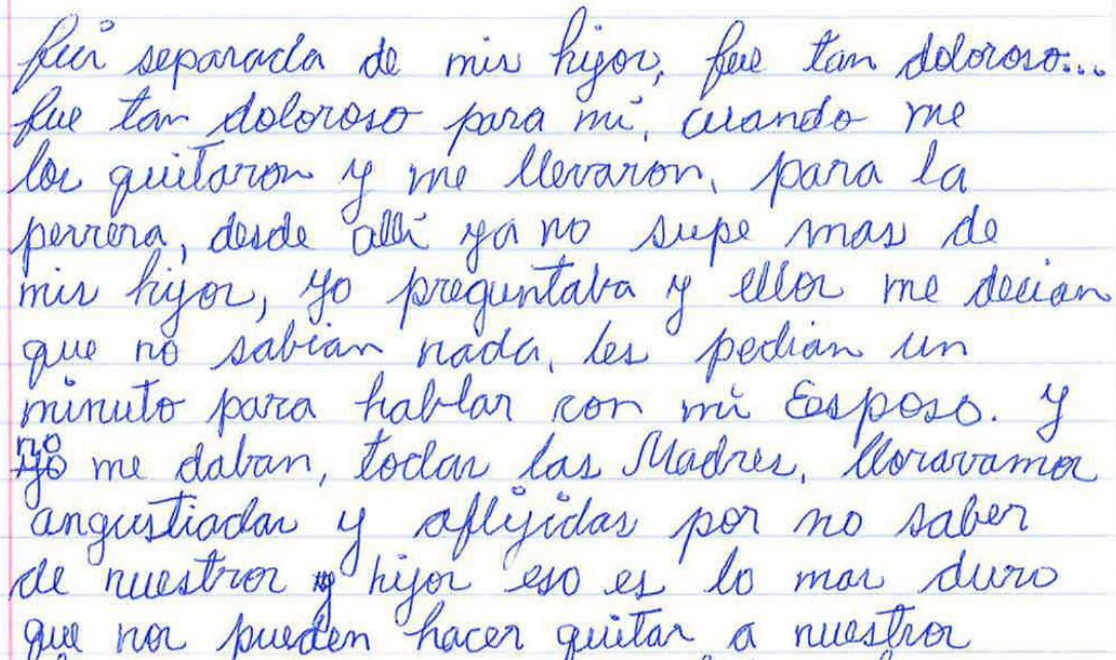
After four days we were moved to another Ice Box, where we were reunited and where we stayed for one day. We were not given food or water the entire day.

My daughter acted very different when we were reunited. She was depressed and did not talk much.

After one day, we were moved to another Dog House that was different than the first one. We stayed at this Dog House for one day and night. We were separated again immediately when we arrived at the second Dog House.

After the second Dog House, we were moved to the Dilley facility. There are no current plans for our release.

Anonymous Female from Guatemala, Formerly Detained in Hidalgo, TX ([CNN](#))



fui separada de mis hijos, fue tan doloroso... fue tan doloroso para mi, cuando me los quitaron y me llevaron, para la perrera, desde allí ya no supe mas de mis hijos, yo preguntaba y ellos me decian que no sabian nada, les pedia un minuto para hablar con mi Esposo. y no me daban, todas las Madres, lloravamo angustiadad y aflijidas por no saber de nuestros hijos eso es lo mas duro que nos pueden hacer quitar a nuestros

© 2017 CNN

The anonymous letter writer came from Guatemala with her 9-year-old daughter and 17-year-old son. Her husband was already in the United States pursuing an asylum claim, and the family wished to be reunited.

The woman spent eight days in "la perrera," the first place she ended up with her children after they were captured in May near Hidalgo, Texas. She was separated from her son as soon as she arrived at the facility, and her daughter stayed with her for one day before she, too, was taken. On May 19, the children were taken to another location in Texas before landing in a center in Michigan.

The woman describes the anguish of the separation in her letter: "From then on, I didn't know anything more about my children, I asked them and they told me they didn't know anything. I asked them for a minute to speak with my husband and they didn't let me, all the mothers were crying in anguish, distraught from not knowing anything about our children, this is the harshest thing they could do, to take our children from us. They told us our kids would be adopted by other people."

At the first holding center, some women were allowed to stay with their infants, she said. To them she attributed a different kind of suffering.

"... They cry from hunger and cold, it makes you sad to see these tiny, defenseless babies," she wrote. "The pregnant women faint, and also the women who cannot stand the pain of not knowing (anything) about their children, their whereabouts..."

The woman finally heard her children's voices again 21 days after she was separated from them. The children were released to their father on June 19.

From the first holding center she went to another one in Laredo, and then to Hutto, transported with her feet and wrists in chains, the letter says. She was released from custody June 26.