

## Call for Artists: Support Immigrant Detainees- Humans of ICE Community Story Telling and Advocacy Project

Humans of ICE is a community storytelling project dedicated to supporting immigrants detained in the Broome County jail. Each week, volunteers organized by Concerned Residents of Greater Binghamton will visit the jail to meet with ICE detainees, listen to their stories, and learn about their needs and goals. Our mission is to connect these individuals and their families with the resources they need, while also sharing their experiences (with their permission) with the wider community to foster understanding and guide advocacy efforts.



We are putting a call out to artists to illustrate the narratives shared by the detainees, who have granted us permission to share their stories on social media. Jail visitors are not allowed to bring a paper or pencil into the visitation room, nor are we able to photograph or bring in any electronic devices, so we are asking illustrators to read the narratives and present their best illustration/image to portray this person's story. We would like to prioritize artists of BIPOC and immigrant backgrounds when possible.

This is the starting point for a longer-working relationship with a group of artists interested in arts in activism. We are hoping to pilot this project for 6 weeks, with a goal of releasing 1-2 illustrated narratives each week. We plan to compensate artists \$50 for each selected sketch/illustration. We are trying to cultivate a collective of artists to continue illustrating these narratives for the foreseeable future. We would like to credit each artist on social media when the narratives are released.

Learn more at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-immigrant-detainees-humans-of-ice-fund> or: <https://www.concernedresidentsofgreaterbing.org/>

**Directions: Please choose one of the following ICE detainee narratives and create an illustration communicating their story, with the purpose of being shared over social media. This is an ongoing project with rolling deadlines. Please email your illustration as a jpeg or png file to [humansofice@proton.me](mailto:humansofice@proton.me) by Monday, February 16, 2026.**

Narratives:

E\_, an Iranian national, was detained upon his arrival in the United States in September 2024 after fleeing persecution in his homeland. As an Information Technology specialist who worked for the Iranian police, Em found himself in the crossroads of the 2022-2023 protests that erupted following the death of a woman who was killed in police custody. She had been put in the prison for now wearing hijab.

E\_ was assigned to crowd control during these demonstrations. He received orders to physically harm protesters, but he refused. Due to this refusal, Em was court martialed and faced criminal charges and acts against the government. E\_ feared for his life, so he made the difficult decision to flee Iran, leaving behind his wife, 11-year-old son, and the rest of his family.

The danger that E\_ faces extends beyond his refusal to harm innocent people. As Protestant Christians, Em and his family are at greater risk of reprisal and persecution.

Despite seeking asylum in the United States, Em was immediately detained by immigration officers upon arrival. His asylum application was denied, though he is currently appealing this decision, with a ruling expected in March 2026. Should this appeal fail, he would have one final opportunity to appeal before a federal court before facing deportation.

During his 16 months in custody, E\_ has tried to remain resilient, teaching himself how to speak English. He holds onto hope that he will be granted asylum, allowing him to begin a new life in the United States and eventually being reunited with his family. His only wish is to hug his son again.

*M. was working as a Livery cab driver in Brooklyn when he was detained by ICE. Originally from Azerbaijan, M. came to the US 8 years ago seeking asylum. He did not want to talk about his asylum case because he has decided to self-deport back to Azerbaijan due to lack of legal representation.*

*He picked up a passenger from a hotel in Brooklyn that asked for a ride all the way up to another hotel close the US-Canadian border. It's not common, but long cab rides like that do happen. Border Patrol followed him for the last two miles, detained his passenger and him.*

*M's main ask was to please get the ICE app that was on the tablets in Batavia installed on the tablets here in BCJ. Right now he can't get a hold of his deportation officer so he doesn't know his exact deportation date. He says every time he asks for help from COs here, they say they cannot help him because it's an ICE matter. He says that there aren't actually any ICE sergeants working at the BC jail, and that he feels there should be at least one so they can get help with these questions.*

*M understands that he is leaving soon, and that we probably can't help him. But he gave us permission to share his story. He said, "Even if you can't help me, maybe you can help the people who come after me."*