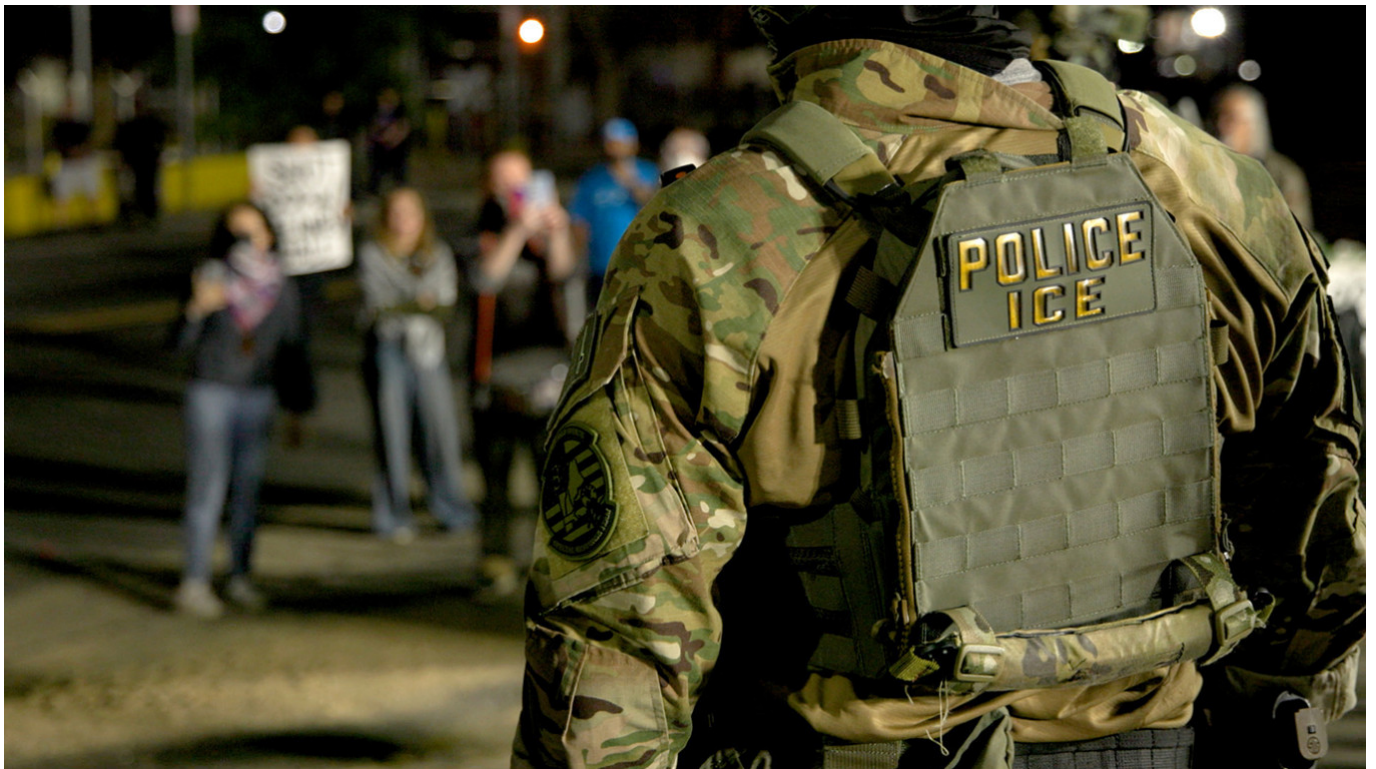


Russians in ICE Detention Plan Hunger Strike to Protest Poor Conditions

By [Brawley Benson](#)

October 06, 2026



ICE/ERO Special Operations Teams near a detention center. **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement / flickr**

More than 50 detainees, including Russian citizens, are planning to launch a hunger strike this week to protest what they have described as unbearably harsh conditions at one of the largest U.S. immigration detention centers, according to three people familiar with the matter.

The detainees are located at the Folkston D. Ray ICE Processing Center, a privately run Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Folkston, Georgia, that was [expanded](#) last year under a \$47-million contract with the Department of Homeland Security.

A document written by detainees dated Sept. 14 and seen by The Moscow Times describes a range of issues. Among them: a lack of adequate medical and dental care, problems communicating with people on the outside, disparaging attitudes from staff and poor living

conditions at the facility, part of which is a converted former prison.

Detainees complain of having limited time outdoors, being unable to sleep, mold on ceilings and mattresses and poor ventilation. One of the document's authors said that he had not had a dental cleaning in his nearly two-year stay at the facility.

The document, originally written in Cyrillic, was authored by two Russian-speaking detainees and signed by 14 of them in total. The wife of one man who signed the document said it was submitted as a formal complaint to multiple federal oversight bodies.

"According to my husband, the most serious problems include food, the inability to sleep and rest properly, difficulties obtaining necessary medical care and the overall conditions of long-term detention," said another Russian woman whose husband is detained in the facility.

Related article: [The Trump Administration Deported a Military Deserter Back to Russia. Then He Escaped Again.](#)

The two women gave similar accounts of the center's conditions and recent developments, as relayed by their husbands, in separate text exchanges with The Moscow Times. Both requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation.

The women said that detainees and their family members on the outside have previously tried to raise the issues with staff, including through formal complaints. The first woman said little had changed — until an inspection was announced for Oct. 6.

After that, "conditions inside the facility, according to my husband and other detainees, began to noticeably change," she said. "In particular, the food and some living conditions improved."

Detainees are skeptical that those changes will last, however.

The hunger strike, a drastic form of protest that puts a participant's health at risk, was initially scheduled to begin Tuesday, the day of the inspection. The first woman said that some people had already begun refusing food on Monday.

She said the goal is to "disrupt this show, draw the inspectors' attention to real, everyday problems, and demonstrate that people have serious grievances against the facility."

Both women said their husbands told them that staff had gathered the would-be participants last week after learning of the planned hunger strike and tried to persuade them to call it off.

"[The women's husbands] say they were warned of the consequences if they continued, including possible separation and isolation," the second woman said.

Neither ICE nor GEO Group, the private contractor managing the Folkston D. Ray ICE Processing Center, responded to a request for comment.

On its website, GEO Group [states](#) that the facility provides basic services including "around-the-clock access to medical care," "dietitian-approved meals" and in-person and virtual

visitation. It also says that the center is accredited by the American Correctional Association.

Hundreds of Russians have fled to the U.S. to seek political asylum in recent years. A growing number of them have [wound up](#) in ICE facilities under the administrations of Presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump, at times facing prolonged detention while their asylum applications are processed. Some have been forcibly [deported](#) back to Russia.

The planned hunger strike will involve detainees of several nationalities. The Moscow Times could not establish how many Russian citizens are planning to participate.

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