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Is 26 Federal Plaza a detention facility?

By **EMILY NGO** | 07/22/2025 04:23 PM EDT

With help from Amira McKee

A LOT IN A NAME: How the Trump administration classifies the Lower Manhattan space where migrants are being held is key to whether House members are permitted inside to conduct oversight.

It’s a detention center, according to congressional Democrats, migrants and their advocates.

It’s a processing center, say Department of Homeland Security officials.

Reps. Nydia Velázquez, Adriano Espaillat, Dan Goldman and Jerry Nadler are considering their options for recourse after being repeatedly denied access to the 10th floor of 26 Federal Plaza.

Those House Democrats are legally authorized as members of Congress to make unannounced inspections of “detention facilities holding individuals in federal immigration custody.” They want to confirm for themselves the reports of overcrowding and lack of meals for migrants awaiting deportation proceedings. Why stop them from visiting if there’s nothing to see, the lawmakers have argued.

Their roadblock has been the Trump administration’s claim that the space isn’t a detention facility in the first place.

Today, new videos surreptitiously captured what Espaillat has called the “notorious 10th floor.” They showed about two dozen migrants crowded into a room, some sleeping on the floor. The videos were released by the New York Immigration Coalition and first reported by THE CITY.

“Since May, ICE has been snatching New Yorkers off the streets and out of immigration court and taking them to this floor,” Velázquez said in a statement. “They’ve claimed it’s not a detention facility, just a ‘processing center,’ to block members of Congress from exercising our legal right to conduct oversight.”

DHS assistant secretary Tricia McLaughlin reiterated the distinction in a statement today and called reports of subprime conditions “categorically false.”

“26 Federal Plaza is not a detention center,” she said. “It is (a) processing center where illegal aliens are briefly processed to be transferred to an ICE detention facility.”

In Washington today, Goldman heard testimony from a Bronx Defenders representative who described migrants being held at 26 Federal Plaza — an administrative building — for days or even weeks with limited access to food, medical care and legal counsel and with so little space that they must sleep sitting up.

“The law requires Congress members to be given access unannounced to any facility that is detaining or otherwise housing immigrants,” Goldman responded. “And certainly what you just described of your clients remaining there for days and days would seem to satisfy the plain language of being detained or otherwise housed.”

“The 10th Floor detention facility must be shut down immediately and regularly inspected to ensure that ICE adheres to federal guidelines as mandated by law,” Murad Awawdeh, president of the New York Immigration Coalition, said in a statement. — **Emily Ngo**

FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

NARCISSE-ISM: Campaign finance regulators slapped City Council Member Mercedes Narcisse with more than \$30,000 in penalties for spending above the limit and for pocketing an extra \$1,744 in leftover campaign funds.

The Brooklyn Democrat reported spending \$14,000 over the \$190,000 limit in the 2021 primary, the New York City Campaign Finance Board found in an audit. After the 2021 race ended, Narcisse’s campaign also withdrew the remaining \$1,744 from her account, which the board interpreted as “converting campaign funds to personal use.”

The board finalized its audit nearly four years after the race. Narcisse won comfortably in 2021, was reelected in 2023 and is all but guaranteed to win again in November.

The \$30,244 total penalty is particularly large for a council race. Council Member Rita Joseph was hit with a \$1,316 penalty Tuesday, for example, while many members avoid penalties all together.

The board declined to comment beyond the brief summary released today. “The issues raised stem from poor record-keeping and gross mismanagement by a former treasurer,” Narcisse said in a statement. “There was no intentional misuse of funds,” she added, saying she’s strengthened internal controls and has run her subsequent campaigns without issues. — **Jeff Coltin**

SPARRING WITH STEPHEN A: Eric Adams and Andrew Cuomo’s fight for support from Black voters in the mayoral race is playing out on podcasts.

During an interview last week on Stephen A. Smith’s pod, Adams accused Cuomo of having a history of undermining Black Democratic candidates — Carl McCall in the 2002 race for governor, Charlie King in the 2006 state attorney general campaign and David Paterson in 2010.

“He has a history when it comes down to Black elected officials,” Adams told Smith. “I’m not calling him a racist. He has a problem against Black men.”

Cuomo, who rebooted his campaign this month after losing to Zohran Mamdani in the June Democratic primary, pushed back. He noted that McCall and Paterson have endorsed his bid for mayor. And King, a longtime confidant, helped run his mayoral primary campaign.

“If somebody has a problem with Black leadership, Black men, because none of them support him,” Cuomo told Smith in a Monday podcast. “Desperate people say desperate things.”

The dustup underscores the need for Adams and Cuomo to get the other man out of the race. The mayor and former governor share an overlapping base that includes Black voters.

Adams, the city’s second Black mayor, has insisted he will remain in the race as Cuomo urges the field to consolidate behind the strongest candidate to defeat Mamdani in the general election.

The former governor has placed a strong second to the 33-year-old democratic socialist in polls. — **Nick Reisman**

FROM CITY HALL

ICE AND ADAMS: Mayor Eric Adams said Tuesday he agreed with the Department of Homeland Security secretary’s criticism of New York’s sanctuary city policies after an officer was shot by an undocumented immigrant Saturday night.

DHS Secretary Kristi Noem heavily criticized the Adams administration Monday, saying the two men charged with the shooting had been arrested multiple times before and each had deportation orders against them.

The mayor, who’s in the midst of an uphill reelection campaign, said he’s long aligned with the sentiments of the top Trump aide.

“I’ve been almost a lone voice in this city talking about this, that we need to examine parts of our laws that allow extremely dangerous people to go in and out of our criminal justice system,” Adams said at a Tuesday press conference.

He was also quick to blame New York’s sanctuary city laws and their proponents in the City Council for the alleged perpetrators moving in and out of city custody without ICE cooperation.

“The City Council has been clear that they have no intention to look at this, and I think it’s unfortunate,” Adams said. “It places everyday documented and undocumented New Yorkers in jeopardy.” — **Amira McKee**

IN OTHER NEWS

- **CITY-OWNED GROCERIES:** Mamdani’s call for city-owned grocery stores has become a hot-button issue for his supporters and critics, but both sides forget that New York City already has six. (Gothamist)
- **FOREIGN DEBT:** Comptroller Brad Lander allowed long-time investments in Israeli government bonds to lapse, a move he says aimed to equalize the city’s treatment of foreign debt. His critics say he furthered the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” campaign. (THE CITY)
- **CLIMATE LAW CHALLENGES:** Compliance with the city’s Local Law 97 will be much more difficult as a key tax credit for solar panels goes away. (Crain’s New York Business)

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