

URGENT ACTION

SHUT DOWN “ALLIGATOR ALCATRAZ” FOR GOOD

The Everglades Detention Facility, also known as “Alligator Alcatraz”, opened in the state of Florida in July 2025 to detain migrants and asylum seekers. It has operated as a deliberate system of dehumanisation and abuse: there are cruel and degrading conditions there, including overflowing sewage, shackling, denial of medical care, sleep deprivation, and punishment practices that amount to torture. The Florida governor has recently announced his intention to close it down, but the federal government insists it will remain open. We demand Florida Governor Ron DeSantis close “Alligator Alcatraz” immediately.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis

State of Florida

The Capitol, 400 S. Monroe St.

Tallahassee, FL 32399, USA

Email: GovernorRon.Desantis@eoq.myflorida.com

Dear Governor DeSantis,

I am writing to demand that you move immediately to shut down the Everglades Detention Center in Florida, also known as “Alligator Alcatraz”, which is currently housing migrants and asylum seekers.

I am concerned about the conditions at “Alligator Alcatraz”. Amnesty International’s latest research concluded that people arbitrarily detained there are living in inhuman and unsanitary conditions, including overflowing toilets with faecal matter seeping into where people are sleeping, limited access to showers, exposure to insects without protective measures, lights on 24 hours a day, poor quality food and water, and lack of privacy, including cameras above the toilets. People interviewed shared that access to medical care is inconsistent, inadequate, or denied altogether, placing individuals at serious risk of physical and mental harm. People reported always being shackled when they were outside their cages. Other treatments that the detained have endured amount to torture, including being put in the “box”, described as a minimal cage-like structure people are put in as punishment, sometimes for hours at a time, exposed to the elements with hardly any water, with their hands and feet attached to restraints on the ground.

Immigration detention is cruel, unnecessary, and rife with abuses. This facility’s intentional cruelty is meant to criminalise and strike fear into immigrant communities. The centre is also located within the Everglades, a fragile ecosystem and one of the state’s most ecologically sensitive areas. I am concerned about the impact of pollution, water quality, and efforts to restore the Everglades and protect endangered species.

“Alligator Alcatraz” is a human rights disaster. As Governor, you have the power and responsibility to protect the lives and dignity of people in Florida. You must take immediate action to close this facility and ensure that the individuals detained inside are released back into their communities, where they can navigate their immigration cases supported by lawyers and outside of detention. You must also end Florida’s laws that criminalise its immigrant residents and end its participation in President Trump’s mass incarceration and deportation machine.

The Everglades Detention Center is inhumane, irresponsible, and life-threatening. I urge you to shut it down immediately and ensure that Florida is not complicit in these abuses.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Everglades Detention Facility, also known as “Alligator Alcatraz” opened in July 2025 with the capacity to detain around 3,000 people. The facility is located in the Everglades, a fragile ecosystem and one of Florida’s most ecologically sensitive areas. In May 2026, new reports announced that the facility would be closed in June or July of the same year at the behest of Florida governor Ron DeSantis. Federal officials quickly rebuked that announcement, claiming it would stay open.

“Alligator Alcatraz” is the first state-owned and operated immigration detention facility in the United States. Consequently, not only is there no federal oversight of the facility. It is also not integrated into ICE’s systems or databases. The absence of registration or tracking mechanisms for those detained at “Alligator Alcatraz” facilitates incommunicado detention and constitutes enforced disappearances when the whereabouts of a person being detained there is denied to their family, and they are not allowed to contact their lawyer. Individuals detained at the facility face barriers to accessing legal representation and due process protections.

While Florida was expecting reimbursement for the costs of the facility from DHS’s new influx of funds for immigration enforcement, yet the state has not and ultimately will not be reimbursed. “Alligator Alcatraz”, also sets a dangerous precedent for how states can partner with the federal government to expand the reach of its mass detention and deportation machine. The State of Florida has also passed laws that criminalize migration and permit racial profiling.

As of December 2025, “Alligator Alcatraz” had already absorbed more than \$360 million USD in state-issued contracts and was projected to require approximately \$450 million USD annually to operate once it is fully functional. Funds for its construction and operation have been taken from the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) at the Governor’s discretion, under emergency procurement powers usually reserved for natural disasters. Amnesty International has documented that the Government of Florida cut resources from essential social and emergency management programs while also allocating discretionary funds from FDEM to finance the construction and operation of “Alligator Alcatraz”.

Immigration detention has long been a problem in the United States, with a history of abuse and cruel conditions. Nevertheless, the US has continued to fund increased detention without improved conditions. As of May 2026, more than 60,000 individuals were detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in more than 100 facilities across the United States. Enhanced enforcement and detention as part of the Trump administration’s plans to remove at least one million individuals from the US in 2025 are resulting in overcrowding and deteriorating detention conditions. In 2026, there have already been 19 deaths in ICE custody. Thirty-one individuals died in ICE custody in 2025 which was the highest number of recorded deaths in decades.

Immigration detention is only allowed in the most exceptional of circumstances. The enjoyment of personal liberty must remain any individual’s default condition. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, like anyone else, must benefit from a legal presumption of liberty. As a consequence, if they are subject to any deprivation of liberty, it must be clearly prescribed by law and strictly justified by a legitimate purpose that is necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. Detention is only appropriate when authorities can demonstrate in each individual case that it is necessary and proportionate to the objective being achieved and on grounds prescribed by law and that alternatives would not be effective. A limited number of specific purposes are recognized as legitimate grounds for detention under international standards, including verifying identity and preventing a person from absconding following an objective assessment or flight risk.

States have an obligation to ensure that conditions of detention meet international human rights law and standards, notably that the conditions of detention are humane and the human rights of detained individuals are respected. This includes protection against torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; access to medical care; exercise; and the ability to communicate with the outside world including consulates, attorneys, and family. ICE also has Performance Based National Detention Center Standards that require access to legal resources, telephone, clean and secure detention conditions, recreation time, nutritionally-balanced meals, and medical care, however it is unclear what standards, if any at all, are being used at “Alligator Alcatraz.”

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 31 August 2026

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Immigrants and people seeking safety (they/them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: [USA: Shut down “Alligator Alcatraz” - Amnesty International](#)