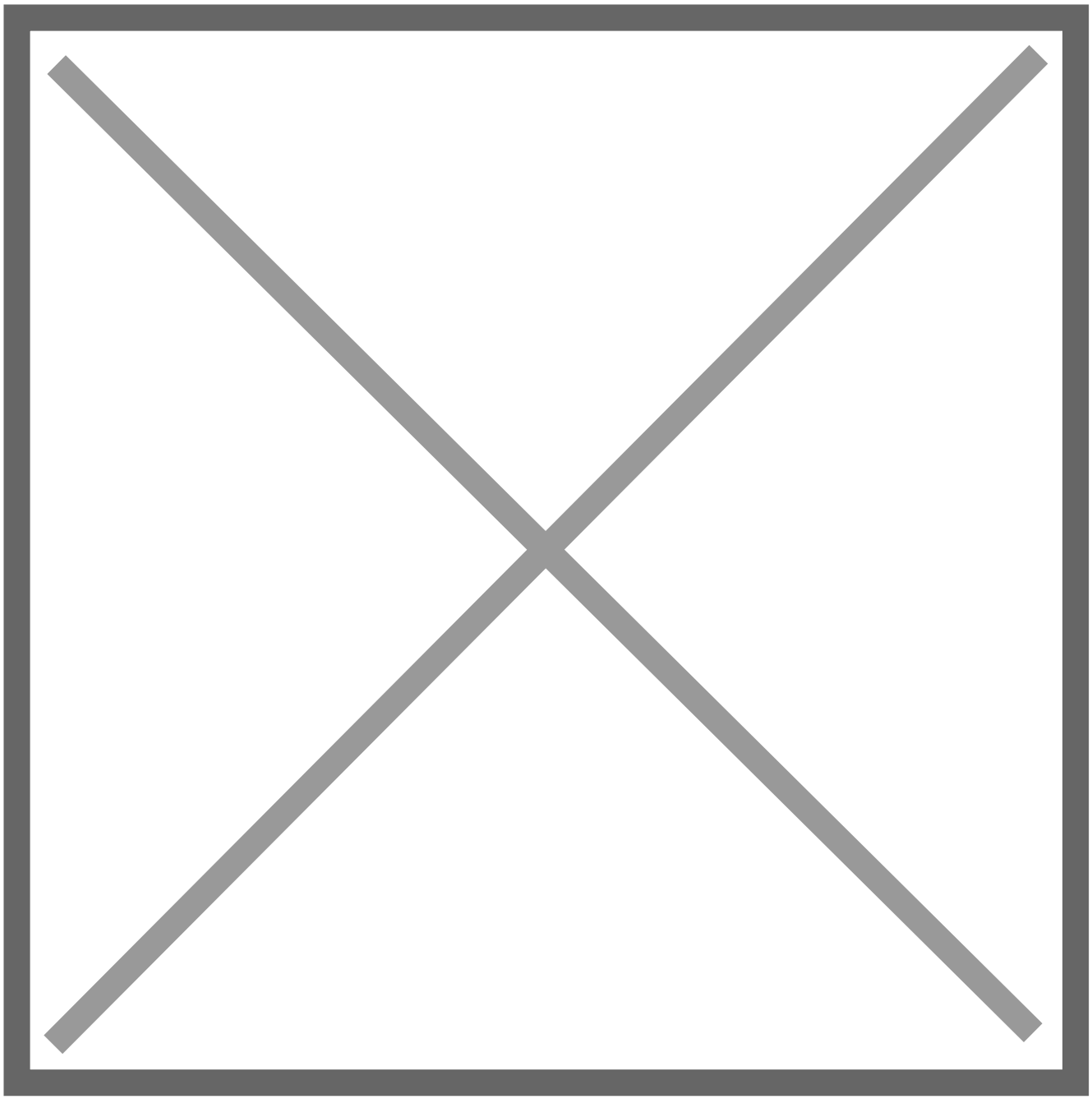
News



A detained woman sits inside a vehicle surrounded by federal agents in Minneapolis Jan. 21, 2026, as immigration enforcement continues after a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent fatally shot Renee Nicole Good on Jan. 7 during enforcement. (OSV News/Reuters/Leah Millis)

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Catholic immigration advocates are speaking out after an internal federal document obtained by CBS News showed most individuals arrested in Trump administration immigration crackdowns over the past year do not have violent criminal records.

Almost 40% of those arrested lacked a criminal record altogether, and were accused of civil immigration offenses — such as being in the U.S. without legal authorization or overstaying a visa — that are usually adjudicated in civil court proceedings.

Sixty percent of ICE arrestees had criminal charges or convictions, but the majority of those charges or convictions were not for violent crimes.

The internal document, which aligns with data compiled by Syracuse University, contrasts sharply with Trump administration claims it is targeting the violent criminals in its sweeping immigration detention operations.

"Catholic social teaching calls us to uphold human dignity and due process," Anna Gallagher, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, told OSV News regarding the data.

Gallagher, whose nonprofit trains and supports a network of over 400 Catholic and community-based immigration law providers in 49 states, emphasized the data "makes clear that many could be living peacefully in our communities while their cases are adjudicated."

CBS News reported Feb. 9 that "less than 14% of nearly 400,000 immigrants arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in President Trump's first year back in the White House had charges or convictions for violent criminal offenses."

The news outlet cited an internal Department of Homeland Security document it had obtained regarding 392,619 total arrests made from Jan. 21, 2025 to Jan. 31, 2026. Arrests by DHS Border Patrol agents, who have bolstered immigration operations in Minneapolis and other U.S. cities, are not included in that total.

DHS states on its website that under Secretary Kristi Noem, its personnel "are fulfilling President Trump's promise and carrying out mass deportations," by "starting with the worst of the worst."

In a Feb. 9 press release, DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said that "70% of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) arrests are of illegal aliens charged or convicted of a crime in the U.S.

"This statistic doesn’t even include foreign fugitives, terrorists, and gang members who lack a rap sheet in the U.S," she said.

However, while McLaughlin pointed to detentions of "criminal illegal alien murderers, pedophiles, and rapists from our communities," the DHS data obtained by CBS News showed that "less than 2% of those arrested by ICE over the past year had homicide or sexual assault charges or convictions."

CBS News said the DHS document indicated "another 2% of those taken into ICE custody were accused of being gang members," with just 0.3% alleged to be members of Tren de Aragua, a criminal organization originating in Venezuela.

While the gang, frequently cited by DHS officials, has expanded to Colombia, Peru and Chile, "there is no solid evidence pointing to a structured expansion of the group" in the U.S., according to the investigative think tank InSight Crime, which focuses on criminal dynamics in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In total, ICE arrests of those either charged with or convicted of homicide, robbery, sexual assault, kidnapping and arson "represents around 13.9% of all arrests" noted in the internal DHS document, said CBS News.

Separately, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University has found that 74.2% (52,504 out of 70,766) of those held in ICE detention

"have no criminal conviction according to data current as of January 25, 2026."

"Many of those convicted committed only minor offenses, including traffic violations," said TRAC on its website.

Stacy Brustin, professor emerita and director of the Immigration Law and Policy Initiative at The Catholic University of America, clarified to OSV News that the two data sets "are a little bit like apples and oranges."

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The CBS data includes "charges, convictions and arrests," while the TRAC data "is just talking about criminal convictions, not charges."

Brustin stressed that "charges are not convictions," and that "we still have innocent until proven guilty here" in the U.S.

CBS News noted that McLaughlin said in a statement following publication of the CBS News report that "Drug trafficking, Distribution of child pornography, burglary, fraud, DUI, embezzlement, solicitation of a minor, human smuggling are all categorized as 'nonviolent crimes.'"

Still, said Brustin, "It's pretty overwhelming to see the numbers being detained who have either absolutely no history, criminal history, or history that is very minor" as well as "very old for minor" infractions.

She added that "huge numbers of individuals that have legal status are being arrested," including "those who have applied for asylum or other kinds of protections and are following the rules."

And, she said, the administration's "numeric quota" for immigration arrests appears to be without "priorities," making it "extremely difficult to target an actual population of people who have serious criminal convictions" amid "indiscriminate enforcement."

Immigration detention has rapidly expanded under the Trump administration, which had hoped to have 108,000 detention beds in place by 2026, according to the American Immigration Council. Detention of children has jumped six-fold under Trump — with 400 children held by ICE on some days — according to an analysis of

deportation data by The Marshall Project.

"Prolonged, unnecessary detention is inhumane, fiscally wasteful, and a poor policy choice that serves no one," said Gallagher.

"We're seeing with these numbers … that the goal, when they talk about the criminal, they're talking about all people of color, all immigrants that they want to remove from here (the U.S.)," said Peter Pedemonti, founding member and co-director of New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia.

A September 2025 Supreme Court decision paved the way for racial profiling in immigration arrests, drawing condemnation from a number of Latino leaders.

Across the U.S., Christians account for approximately 80% of all of those at risk of President Donald Trump’s mass deportation effort, with the single largest group of affected Christians being Catholics (61%), according to a joint Catholic-Evangelical report published by World Relief and the USCCB.

The report found one in six Catholics (18%) are either vulnerable to deportation or live with someone who is.

In Minneapolis — which became a deadly flashpoint for protests against immigration arrests, and which is home to the largest Somali community in the U.S. — non-white ethnic communities have expressed increased fears of ICE detention.

Native American tribal leaders have also reported incidents of ICE agents questioning, harassing and detaining their members, who have U.S. birthright citizenship.

But mass deportation has also put an estimated 10,000 Irish working and living in the U.S. without authorization in the administration's sights.

Seamus Culleton, who was picked up by ICE in September for overstaying his visa over 15 years ago, described his nearly five months in ICE detention in a call to Irish broadcaster RTÉ as a "nightmare." According to his family, Culleton had obtained a valid work permit and was on the cusp of his final interview for a spousal Green Card.

The Kilkenny, Ireland, native described subhuman living conditions in the El Paso, Texas, detention center, with "completely nasty" toilets and showers and "very very

small meals" for him and his fellow detainees, likening it to a "modern day concentration camp." He appealed for Irish politicians to get him out: "I mean I just want to get back to my life, we were so desperate to start a family."

The Trump administration has countered that Culleton was offered, and declined, immediate deportation to Ireland. It also has claimed that ICE has higher standards of detention than most U.S. prisons.

"If we allow affable Irish bartenders and tradesmen such as Culleton to skirt the rules, then so too can cartel members, or foreign terrorists, so long as they don’t get caught committing crimes. That’s not acceptable," Fox News commentator David Marcus, a Catholic, argued in a Feb. 11 opinion piece. He said there should be no path to citizenship and a penalty for those present in the country illegally, and that Trump was elected to carry out deportations "even if the illegal immigrant has a lovely, lilting Irish brogue."

Pedemonti, who spoke with OSV News during a weekly prayer vigil his organization conducts outside of Philadelphia's ICE field office, said the immigration arrest and detention data was a wakeup call.

"This is a moment where we need to stand up — as individuals, as a church, at our workplaces — to make sure we're stopping this," he said. "From a Catholic perspective, Jesus teaches us to love our neighbor, to welcome the stranger, and he doesn't pause to say, 'if they have papers or if they are worthy.'"

The less than 14% of detainees who do have charges or convictions for violent criminal offenses are not "any kind of rationale" for the mass detentions, said Pedemonti, stressing those individuals are also loved by Jesus.

DHS has not yet responded to an OSV News request for comment.

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.