

SAMPLE IMMIGRATION COURT WATCH OBSERVATION FORM

In May 2025, advocates began hearing reports spreading across the country of ICE trial attorneys moving to dismiss pending cases in immigration court. Those people whose cases are dismissed are then arrested by ICE officers in or outside of the court and put into expedited removal proceedings. Many rapid response networks have shifted resources to court watching in order to monitor and report out trends in these dismissals and arrests.

This document is intended only to suggest what information might be useful to collect while ICE is conducting arrests in immigration courts. People interested in deeper thinking on court watch projects can refer to existing resources for more information. Some existing options are from [HOPE Border Institute](#), [Advocates for Human Rights](#), and [the ABA](#). The ABA has a national court watch project that people can consider. **The National Immigration Project is not coordinating court watch efforts and you do not need to return any data collected to us.**

This document contemplates in-person observation, where the court watcher is in the court, but could be adapted for WebEx Court Watch to just monitor for dismissals. This document does not encourage or direct any action during hearings or arrests. Please do not record anything (audio, video, or photos) during a hearing.

This sample is designed with two sections: Page 1 is a summary of the observer's shift of court watching; Page 2 is a record of each hearing observed. **It is recommended to print multiple copies of Page 2 for court watch shifts.**

Depending on your court watch program and volunteer availability, it might be more efficient to divide observers up and have some in the courtrooms watching hearings and others in the lobby, hallways, or outside the court monitoring for arrests. In this case, one observer may not have all of the information requested on Page 1, and would need to coordinate with another observer to capture all of the recommended data.

This sample does not recommend collecting and recording personal identifying information (PII) like name or A-number. In general, PII should **only** be collected if you intend to provide services to the person whose PII you collect. If you do collect PII, please be thoughtful when electronically storing this data. Consider encrypted platforms like CryptPad or Proton Drive and communicating on platforms like Signal. Summaries of courtwatch should generally be anonymized.

Date: _____ Imm. Ct. Address: _____

Judge: _____ Courtroom #: _____ Time in: _____ Time out: _____

SUMMARY INFORMATION:

Type of hearings observing: ☐ Master ☐ Bond ☐ Individual ☐ N/A

Did you see ICE? ☐ Yes ☐ No How many officers? _____

If yes, where? ☐ In the courtroom ☐ In the lobby ☐ Outside ☐ Other _____

What is ICE wearing? ☐ Uniforms ☐ Plain clothes

How many hearings did you observe? _____ How many dismissals? _____

How many arrests did you observe? _____

Name the locations where the arrests took place (i.e., in the courtroom, in the hallway, in the lobby, near the elevators, outside the building):

Additional information / notes:

FOR EACH HEARING OBSERVED:

Is the person in-person in the court or virtual over WebEx? ☐ In-person ☐ WebEx

Does the person in proceedings have a lawyer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Country of origin/citizenship: _____ or ☐ Unknown

Date or year of entry in the U.S.: _____ or ☐ Unknown

Did DHS move to dismiss the case? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, verbally or in writing? ☐ Verbally ☐ In writing (the judge would refer to a filed motion)

What reason did DHS give for moving to dismiss?

Response from the person in proceedings (or their lawyer):

- ☐ Judge did not ask them their position
- ☐ They did not seem to understand what was going on
- ☐ They agreed
- ☐ They opposed or objected

Result of DHS' dismissal motion:

- ☐ Judge granted and dismissed the case
- ☐ Judge asked for the motion to be filed in writing
- ☐ The person asked for and was granted a continuance to respond
- ☐ The person did not ask for, but was given a continuance to respond
- ☐ Judge denied the motion and did not dismiss the case

Was the person arrested ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

If yes, where? _____

Did you hear ICE say where they were being taken? _____

Additional notes:
