



January 23, 2019

Interim Police Chief David Kiddle  
Grand Rapids Police Department  
1 Monroe Center St NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss  
Grand Rapids City Commissioners  
City Manager Mark Washington  
300 Monroe Avenue NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

**RE: Demand for Investigation Into GRPD's Role in Calling ICE on United States Citizen Jilmar Ramos-Gomez**

Dear Interim Police Chief Kiddle, Mayor Bliss, City Commissioners, and Mr. Washington,

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan (ACLU) and the Michigan Immigrants' Rights Center (MIRC), we write to express our deep concern over the Grand Rapids Police Department's (GRPD) decision to call U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after arresting Jilmar Ramos-Gomez. As you know, Mr. Ramos-Gomez is a United States citizen and decorated Marine combat veteran whom local law enforcement officials handed over to ICE officials for deportation on December 14, 2018.

We demand an immediate investigation to determine why the GRPD called ICE on Mr. Ramoz-Gomez, even though he had his U.S. passport on him when he was arrested. We further demand that the City and the GRPD share the results of that investigation with the public at the January 29, 2019 City Commission meeting, and adopt policies to ensure that the GRPD is not turning other members of our community over to ICE.

Mr. Ramos-Gomez was born in Grand Rapids, grew up here, and bravely served our country in Afghanistan. Like many veterans who have been engaged in combat, he experiences post-traumatic stress disorder. On November 21, 2018 he was arrested by

GRPD officers after an incident at Spectrum Health where he entered the helipad. Mr. Ramos-Gomez later pled guilty to trespassing.

As the GRPD's own police report makes clear, Mr. Ramos-Gomez was carrying his U.S. passport with him when he was arrested. GRPD officers inspected that that passport when they searched his belongings. Mr. Ramos-Gomez also had numerous other forms of identification. He had a REAL ID compliant Michigan driver's license—a form of identification one cannot get unless one is lawfully present in the United States. That license also clearly identifies him as veteran. He had his military ID card. He was wearing his military tags. He even had his childhood Kent District Library card.

And yet, the GRPD called ICE. We need to know why.

The GRPD's evasive public statement raises more questions than it answers. The GRPD asserted that because the incident for which Mr. Ramos-Gomez was arrested involved federal airspace, the GRPD contacted federal authorities. We appreciate that there are situations where it is appropriate to coordinate with *relevant* federal law enforcement agencies. But why did the GRPD contact ICE? ICE is the federal agency responsible for immigration enforcement, and the GRPD had Mr. Ramos-Gomez's U.S. passport, license, military ID, and U.S. Marine Corps tags. What made the GRPD think that Mr. Ramos-Gomez was illegally present in the United States? Would the GRPD have called ICE if Mr. Ramos-Gomez were white and his name was John Smith? How many times does the GRPD call ICE on members of our community and how many of them are people of color?

Former GRPD Chief David Rahinsky has publically represented that GRPD is not concerned with immigration status and does not target immigrants.<sup>1</sup> But that was not true in Mr. Ramos-Gomez's case. And we, along with many members of the community, believe it is frequently not true in other cases. We demand an explanation as to why the actual practice of the GRPD here diverged from its public statements. We also demand transparency about GRPD's actual practices with respect to ICE, including public disclosure of data on the number and nature of GRPD-ICE interactions.

The GRPD has failed to be transparent with the public about its role in this terrible incident and has failed to accept responsibility for that role. The City and GRPD should conduct an investigation and should present the findings at the upcoming January 29 City Commission meeting. The City should then, in light of that report, adopt policies to ensure that the GRPD is never complicit in such an incident again. And the City should

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<sup>1</sup> Dominick Mastrangelo, *Grand Rapids Police Chief Says That Department Will Not Target Immigrants*, MLive Michigan, February 21, 2017 at [https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2017/02/grand\\_rapids\\_police\\_chief\\_says.html](https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2017/02/grand_rapids_police_chief_says.html).

ensure that the voices of the community are heard in that process, so that the policies to prevent the dangerous entanglement between the GRPD and ICE reflect the needs of everyone in our community, citizens and immigrants alike.

In the interest of full transparency, and so that we can conduct our own investigation, we ask that the City and GRPD also provide the records sought in our enclosed FOIA request.

We, and the community, look forward to receiving your report.

Sincerely,

Miriam Aukerman  
ACLU of Michigan

Hillary Scholten  
Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

Encl: FOIA Request