

CALIFORNIA

Judge orders ICE to release four California detainees because of coronavirus risk



APRIL 9, 2020 | 11:46 AM

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal judge in San Francisco has ordered the release of four immigrants held in federal detention centers in California because their age and medical conditions make them

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vulnerable to the potentially deadly coronavirus, lawyers for the detainees said Thursday.

U.S. Senior District Judge Maxine M. Chesney took the action Wednesday in response to a lawsuit filed by the ACLU and other lawyers groups.

“This decision is an important step,” said William Freeman, senior counsel at the ACLU Foundation of Northern California. “The stakes for the release of detained persons are at an all-time high as the threat of the COVID-19 outbreak places them at an elevated risk of serious ailments or death.”

The four people ordered released from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement centers suffer from a variety of conditions, including diabetes, asthma hypertension and kidney disease.

“Our brave clients have shown that while the rest of world takes unprecedented safety measures in the face of a global pandemic, ICE has endangered their lives by continuing business as usual,” said Bree Bernwanger, senior staff lawyer at the Bay Area’s Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights.

“But in this decision,” he said, “the court recognized that no immigration policy is more important than protecting human life.”



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