

Police State USA: Thousands of Americans Have Been Illegally Detained in Chicago's CIA-Style Detention Center

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Chicago, IL – The Chicago Police's CIA-style black site, Homan Square, has seen more people detained than died on 9/11 or imprisoned at Guantanamo, [according to a new report by the Guardian](#). The newspaper, which sued the Chicago police to obtain further details on Homan Square, reports overwhelming targeting of minorities as well as other sordid and violative policies.

From 2004 to 2015, at least 3,500 people were detained at Homan Square. These records do not cover the full span of the facility's tenure, as it has been open since 1995. According to the Guardian, a grossly disproportionate ratio of detainees were minorities, *"many accused of low-level drug crimes, [and] faced with incriminating themselves before their arrests appeared in a booking system by which their families and attorneys might find them."*

The majority of arrests were for low-level drug crimes. As the Guardian details, there were 1,175 arrests for heroin, 526 for cannabis, 484 for cocaine, and 464 for "unspecified" drug charges. 244 arrests were made in relation to firearms while other arrests were for *"minor infractions such as traffic violations, public urination and driving without a seatbelt."* Other charges ranged from drinking alcohol in public to murder. More than half of all Homan Square arrests occurred 2.5 miles or less from the facility. Of 3,621 arrest records provided to the Guardian, about 3,540 incurred charges (the newspaper notes that *"[v]ast amounts of data documenting the full scope of detentions and interrogations at Homan Square remain undisclosed"*).

Though blacks make up [33% of Chicago's population](#), 82% of those detained at Homan Square were black. Of the 3,500 detained, only three were allowed official visits from attorneys, two of which were on the same day in 2013. The Guardian noted it was able to find eight other instances of lawyers entering the facilities, though four were to accompany clients turning themselves in.

Craig Futterman of the University of Chicago Law School observed that *"In Chicago, the police do not provide people with attorneys at the police station at the times they most need them: when they're subject to interrogation...That's what the Miranda warning is all about: the right to counsel while interrogated by police."* Though police have said that *"any individual who wishes to consult a lawyer will not be interrogated until they have an opportunity to do so,"* the Guardian notes that this would mean 3,500 people waived their right to an attorney.

Former top Obama aide and current Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who presided over $\frac{2}{3}$ of the arrests— 2,522 since he took office in 2011—has insisted that Chicago police “*follow all the rules.*” However, in addition to the lack of access to attorneys, first-hand accounts reveal a starkly different story.

In February, the [Anti-Media reported](#) on detainees held for marijuana, shackled to poles, and denied lawyers. Since the initial news broke that month, 118 arrests have been made. Charles Jones was arrested (for a second time) on March 17 after police officers broke in his door looking for a 5’8” man. Jones is 6’4”, but when officers—some masked— found a firearm in his air conditioning unit, they took him back to Homan Square. He was shackled to a pole in an “interrogation room” and his requests for a lawyer were denied over the course of six to eight hours (others claim to have had similar experiences while other allegations include [sexual abuse](#), [starvation](#), [sensory deprivation](#), and [beatings](#)).

Jones suspects they conduct such arrests to extract information on drug dealers.

“The only reason you’re brought to Homan and Fillmore [the facility’s cross streets] is to extract information,” he said. “The police probably feel they need those covert operations because that’s the only way to get the intel they need instead of doing the good work – the hard work...It’s easy to just go grab someone, throw ‘em somewhere – no food, no water, no access to the outside world, intimidating and threatening ‘em.”

Jones’ wife and mother of his three children was unable to locate him once he was arrested, in spite of her slew of calls to police departments across the city. Jones is currently in the midst of suing the police department for a separate 2012 case where he claims he was charged for refusing to “*give them information and cooperate with them.*”

Rich Dressman, a white 50-year-old man, says he left town to evade pressure from police to act as an informant. “*My life would be a lot easier if I gave them information,*” he said. “*I’d be home with a nice long shower and all that bullshit.*”

Though police insist there is nothing disreputable about the facility, saying the square “*merely house[s] undercover units,*” the number and nature of arrests paint a markedly different reality. More people have been detained and charged at the formerly secret black site than were [killed on 9/11](#), though such abuses are often *justified* by the terrorist attacks that occurred that day (even as the Patriot Act and Homan arrests [overwhelmingly focus on drug “crimes”](#)). More people have been illegally detained at Homan than [suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay](#), the globally infamous military torture facility scorned for flouting due process and holding innocent people for a decade. Guantanamo has been open longer than the span of released records from Homan Square.

That the Chicago police *continued to arrest* people—even after news of its abuses sparked widespread outrage—highlights the impunity with which they operate. That the numbers far surpass other outrageous figures demonstrates the United States’ increasingly misplaced priorities and disregard for the justice and freedom it claims to protect.

As Flint Taylor, who helped pressure Mayor Emanuel and the police to provide compensation to victims of police abuses said, “*Hopefully, Chicago’s political leadership and its establishment media will finally take notice and stop collaborating to bury this story, so righteously championed by the Guardian, under the rug of denial and false ignorance.*”

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