News



Screengrab of a photo of Sr. Letty Ugboaja, posted on the Our Lady of Sorrows Church Facebook page (GSR/Facebook/Our Lady of Sorrows Church)



by Rhina Guidos

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A Texas parish is asking for prayers — and congressional officials are speaking out — after a report that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials detained a nun on her way to Sunday Mass for several hours June 28.

News agencies in Texas' Rio Grande Valley said Sr. Letty Ugboaja was released from ICE custody hours later, after intervention from several congressional representatives.

"My team and I are working with [the Department of Homeland Security] to gather details regarding the detainment," Republican congresswoman Monica De La Cruz, of Texas' 15th Congressional District, wrote June 28 on various social media channels. "I have elevated this to the highest levels and will provide additional information as it becomes available."

Ugboaja is a member of the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy, founded in Nigeria.

Our Lady of Sorrows parish, where the sister was to attend Mass in the border city of McAllen, Texas, shared the news of her detention on Facebook shortly after it happened.

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"We pray for her safety, peace, and strength during this difficult time, and we hope for a swift and just resolution that allows her to be released soon," the parish wrote.

The Diocese of Brownsville has not commented on the incident, which has raised questions from politicians on both sides of the aisle about why a nun in a habit would be a target.

"This is just another effect of this administration's hyperaggressive immigration policies in our communities. They have now led to targeting nuns on their way to Sunday Mass. It's a far cry of the criminals they said they would detain and deport," said Texas Congressman Vicente Gonzalez, a Democrat.

De La Cruz also said immigration enforcement shouldn't be random.

"As I have repeatedly said, our immigration enforcement should target violent criminals," she said. "A Catholic nun on her way to church is not a threat to our community."

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