

Human Rights Monitoring in Immigration Court

For far too long the deportation machinery has operated behind closed doors. Through immigration court observation, we seek to:

- Engage the public in understanding of the immigration court system and its underlying injustice.
- Envision what a just immigration system can and should look like.
- Foster local level change in immigration courts.
- Support and connect community-led immigration court monitoring projects across the country.

Immigration court monitoring projects already exist in a number of places around the United States. Consider becoming part of those initiatives, which are systematically collecting information and documenting issues.

You do not have to be part of a monitoring project to observe immigration court hearings, so consider observing hearings even if there is not a project near you. If you choose to observe a hearing, we encourage you to be responsible and ethical in your work.

Step 1: Locate the immigration court near you.

Immigration courts are part of the U.S. Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review. Courts operate in 29 states, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Courts are located in metropolitan areas and in remote detention centers. While immigration court proceedings are generally open to the public, the Department of Homeland Security or private prisons may control entry into the building. Go to <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/eoir-immigration-court-listing> to find immigration court locations.

Step 2: Follow trial monitoring protocols.

Trial monitoring is an established human rights monitoring practice. Monitors' presence underscores the right to a fair public trial. Observers may see unfair or unjust situations. Your role is to witness and document these instances. Attempting to interfere will result in your expulsion from the hearing and will not help the individual's case. We encourage observers to build relationships with local immigrant rights organizations and immigration attorneys so that the information you learn can be acted upon.

[Immigration Courtroom Observation Resources](#) | [EOIR Court Observer Guidelines](#)

[OSCE Trial Monitoring Practitioner's Guide](#) | [Clooney Foundation for Justice Trial Watch Resources](#)

Step 3: Be responsible with the information you learn.

Immigration court hearings are open to the public, but they deal with real people. Do not invade people's privacy. Establish and respect boundaries. Observers should never record personal information such as addresses or phone numbers or attempt to follow up with people outside the courtroom.

Step 4: Connect. Share. Advocate.

Share what you are learning, talk through issues, and help create just immigration with [The Advocates for Human Rights](#), the University of Minnesota Law School [James H. Binger Center for New Americans](#), and Robins Kaplan LLP. Email courtobserver@umn.edu to stay in touch.