

LGBT abuse alleged

By Georgia Garvey

REDEYE

A legal advocacy group announced Wednesday that it filed complaints with the Department of Homeland Security on behalf of more than a dozen gay and transgender people who say they were mistreated while in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody in states including Illinois.

The allegations include accusations of rape, harassment and denial of medical treatment while the individuals, some of whom are now in the U.S. legally, were kept in ICE custody in locations including those where Chicago-area immigrants would be held.

Raquel Gomez Medina, 33, spent about 15 months in ICE detention facilities in Illinois and Wisconsin before her case was resolved and she was classified as a legal resident. Medina, who is transgender, describes verbal abuse, denial of medication and at least one incident in which she was assaulted by a guard who grabbed her breasts.

With her sister translating, Medina recalled an incident in Illinois in which she was thrown into a cold, dark room with no blanket. She slept on toilet paper, she said.

"Nothing can explain the treatment of Raquel other than animus or hostility," said Eric Berndt, supervising attorney for the National Asylum Partnership on Sexual Minorities, which is a branch of the National Immigrant Justice Center.

Officials with the Department of Homeland Security said ICE "takes any allegations of



Raquel Gomez Medina (left), who is transgender, said Wednesday she was abused while in immigration custody. Her sister Alin Aranda translated for her. LENNY GILMORE/REDEYE

mistreatment or abuse very seriously." Spokeswoman Gail Montenegro said in a statement that ICE "intends to review the complaint filed today and take appropriate action."

Mary Meg McCarthy, executive director of the NIJC, called the filing of the complaints "unprecedented" and critical to getting proper treatment for sexual minorities.

"These individuals came to the United States to escape persecution in their native

countries only to face continued abuse in the U.S. immigration system," she said.

The complaints filed by the NIJC seek to urge the Obama administration to look into alternatives to detaining lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender immigrants in ICE custody, McCarthy said. The group also hopes the complaints will lead to more investigations into allegations of harassment.

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Here comes the concrete truck caravan

Chicago Tribune

A caravan of about 125 concrete-mixing trucks is scheduled to head downtown Thursday to pour the first of seven intersections being rebuilt in the Wacker Drive reconstruction project, officials said Wednesday.

Work will begin about 8 a.m., weather permitting, at Wacker and Randolph Street and take about eight hours, according to the Chi-

cago Department of Transportation.

Motorists are advised to avoid Wacker and Lake Street, CDOT officials said.

More than 1,100 cubic yards of concrete will be poured to a depth of 13 inches, equivalent to about 18 city blocks of sidewalk, or about 2.25 miles, officials said.

Crews have removed Upper and Lower Wacker from Randolph to about 200 feet south of Washington Street, installed new

columns and placed forms to support the pouring of concrete for Upper Wacker, officials said. Lower Wacker has remained open to local traffic to allow access to loading docks and parking garages.

Wacker is being rebuilt from just south of Washington to Monroe Street this year, and from Monroe to Van Buren in 2012. Work also is taking place to reconfigure the interchange at Wacker and Congress Parkway.

Playboy exec leaving Chicago

Playboy Enterprises on Wednesday sought to downplay speculation that its headquarters were headed for the West Coast from Chicago, despite the fact that its editorial director posted a Facebook message saying he is moving there.

Another Wal-Mart?

Wal-Mart is in talks to open a Wal-Mart Express convenience store in River North, according to real estate sources. The retailer reportedly is eyeing a location at 225 W. Chicago Ave. at the corner of Franklin Avenue.

Rahm's \$5,000 'friend'

Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel is collecting contributions ahead of his inauguration May 16 in Chicago. There are varying levels of support, including \$25,000 "sponsors," \$10,000 "supporters" and a \$5,000 "friend" level. TRIBUNE