

Minnesota

ICE detains five-year-old Minnesota boy arriving home, say school officials

Superintendent says Liam Ramos and his father were taken into custody while in their driveway and sent to Texas

50% off an All-access digital subscription for six months



Continue →

Maybe later



50% off an All-access digital subscription for six months



Continue →

Sam Levin

Thu 22 Jan 2026 03.24 CET

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detained a five-year-old **Minnesota** boy on Tuesday as he returned home from school and transported him and his father to a Texas detention center, according to school officials.

Liam Ramos, a preschooler, and his father were taken into custody while in their driveway, the superintendent of the school district in Columbia Heights, a Minneapolis suburb, said at a press conference on Wednesday. Liam, who had recently turned five, is one of four children in the school district who have been detained by federal immigration agents during the Trump administration's enforcement surge in the region over the last two weeks, the district said.



📷 Liam Ramos.
Photograph: Courtesy
of Columbia Heights
Public Schools

Liam and his father had just arrived home when they were detained, according to Zena Stenvik, the superintendent, who said she drove to the home when she learned of the detentions.

When she arrived, Stenvik said the father's car was still running and the father and son had already been apprehended. An agent had taken Liam out of the car, led the boy to his front door and directed him to knock on the door asking to be let in, "in order to see if anyone else was home - essentially using a five-year-old as bait", the superintendent said in a statement.

Stenvik said another adult living in the home was outside during the encounter and had pleaded to take care of Liam so the boy could avoid detention, but was denied. Liam's older brother, a middle schooler, came home 20 minutes later to find his father

50% off an All-access digital subscription for six months



Continue →

are not criminals.” He said there was no order of deportation against them and he believes the father and son have remained together in detention.



📷 Liam Ramos, five, detained by ICE in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, outside his home on Tuesday. Photograph: Courtesy of Columbia Heights Public Schools

School officials released two photos of the encounter, one showing Liam, in a blue knit hat, outside his front door with a masked agent by his side, and another showing Liam standing by a car with a man holding onto his backpack.

“Why detain a five-year-old? You cannot tell me that this child is going to be classified as a violent criminal,” Stenvik said.

Tricia McLaughlin, Department of Homeland Security assistant secretary, said in a statement Wednesday night that ICE was conducting a “targeted operation” to arrest Liam’s father, who she called an “illegal alien”. “ICE did NOT target a child,” she said. McLaughlin also alleged the father “fled on foot - abandoning his child”, saying, “For the child’s safety, one of our ICE officers remained with the child

while the other officers apprehended [his father].”

“Parents are asked if they want to be removed with their children, or ICE will place the children with a safe person the parent designates,” she added.

The school district provided a statement from Liam’s teacher, who expressed

50% off an All-access digital subscription for six months



Continue →

Also on Tuesday, a 17-year-old Columbia Heights student was taken by “armed and masked agents” without parents present, Stenvik said. That student was removed from their car, she said.

In another case on 14 January, ICE agents “pushed their way into an apartment” and detained a 17-year-old high school girl and her mother, Stenvik said.

And in a fourth case, on 6 January, a 10-year-old fourth grade student was allegedly taken by ICE on her way to elementary school with her mother. The superintendent said the 10-year-old called her father during the arrests and said that ICE agents would bring her to school, but when the father arrived at the school, he discovered both his daughter and wife had been taken. By the end of that school day, the mother and daughter were in a detention center in Texas.

Stenvik reported that as school officials were preparing for the press conference on Wednesday afternoon, an ICE vehicle drove onto the property of the district’s high school and were told by administrators to leave.

“ICE agents have been roaming our neighborhoods, circling our schools, following our buses, coming into our parking lots and taking our kids,” Stenvik said.

DHS did not respond to inquiries about the other arrests and the report of ICE’s arrival on campus.

In an interview after the press conference, the superintendent said the arrests and looming presence of ICE had taken an enormous toll on students, parents and school staff.

“Our children are traumatized. The sense of safety in our community and around our schools is shaken,” Stenvik said. “I can speak on behalf of all school staff when I say our hearts are shattered. After our fourth student was taken yesterday, I just thought someone has to hear the story. They’re taking

50% off an All-access digital subscription for six months



Continue →

Rachel Leingang contributed reporting

Most viewed

50% off an All-access digital subscription for six months



Continue →