

Woman Charged With Child Abuse at New Mexico Compound Was in US Illegally for 20 Years

A Haitian woman who was charged with child abuse at a New Mexico compound has been taken into custody by immigration authorities after living in the United States illegally for over 20 years, federal officials said on Wednesday.

Jany Leveille, 35, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Taos County on Tuesday and must appear before a judge to resolve her immigration status, according to a statement by ICE.

The immigration proceeding, which could lead to Leveille's deportation, follows a raid on the compound Aug. 3 in which police said they found 11 children living in dirty conditions with no food or water. Three days later, police unearthed the body of a toddler at the ramshackle settlement north of Taos.

"Leveille has been unlawfully present in the U.S. for more than 20 years after overstaying the validity of her non-immigrant visitor visa," an ICE statement said.

Kelly Golightley, Leveille's lawyer, declined comment.

Leveille moved to Brooklyn from Haiti in 1998 after their father died, according to her brother Von Chelet Leveille. She then moved several times between Georgia, Philadelphia and New York, following her separation from her first husband, Von Chelet Leveille said in a phone interview from Haiti.

Leveille had lived at the compound near Amalia, New Mexico since January with her husband Siraj Ibn Wahhaj and children,

according to prosecutors. Her six children range in age between 1 and 15, her brother said.

Leveille, Ibn Wahhaj and three other adults at the compound were charged with child abuse on Aug. 8 and their 11 children were taken into protective custody.

The body found at the compound is believed to be that of Ibn Wahhaj's severely ill 3-year-old son, Abdul-Ghani Wahhaj. Ibn Wahhaj is accused of abducting the boy from a second wife in Georgia in December. Prosecutors allege the boy later died as Ibn Wahhaj carried out a faith-healing ritual on him at the compound.

Prosecutors have accused Ibn Wahhaj of leading firearms training for two teenage boys at the compound to carry out attacks on schools, banks and police.

Lawyers for the five defendants say they are being discriminated against because they are black Muslims who practiced faith healing and taught their children how to shoot. Neighbors and relatives dispute allegations the children were starving.

A district judge received death threats on Tuesday after she granted bail to the defendants. {eo}

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