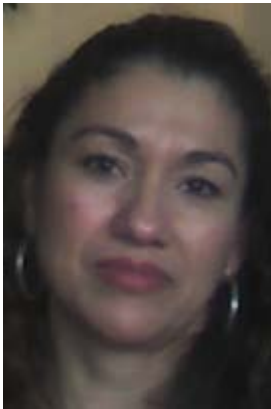


## MOUNTAIN VIEW WOMAN FACES DEPORTATION TO EL SALVADOR

**Survivor of domestic violence scared to return to where her abuser awaits her.**

By [Claudia Cruz](#) | [Email the author](#) |



*Editor's Note: Story has been updated with a statement from the Immigration and Custom Enforcement agency.*

After years of physical abuse by her husband and an indifferent response from local authorities when asked for protection, Irma Medrano fled El Salvador 15 years ago and came to the U.S., settling in Mountain View.

Now she is sitting in a Yuba County jail cell facing "imminent deportation," her lawyer said Monday.

Medrano, 44, has been detained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security since Thursday, Oct. 21.

"*Yo la vi triste*; I saw that she was sad," said her sister, Paula Cano, who visited her Saturday. "The whole family feels defeated. I didn't take her 9-year-old son, because I didn't want him to see her in that [jail] uniform."

Cano spoke to Mountain View Patch a week ago by phone from her home in Hayward. Cano had just returned from San Francisco, where Medrano had been taken, but, according to Cano, she waited an hour and half to see her and then was told visiting hours were over.

"I was left there waiting with both children," she said. In addition to the boy, Medrano has a 12-year-old daughter, both American-born. The children's father, Cano said, was deported two years ago. She also has daughters in El Salvador.

Attorney [Aubra Fletcher](#) said she filed a motion for a stay of removal for Medrano, which is a request for postponement of her deportation. The Department of Homeland Security, however, denied the motion, and she has filed another motion for reconsideration.

Fletcher also filed a motion to reopen Medrano's deportation case with the U.S. Department of Justice, which could give Medrano the ability to file for asylum on the basis of violence toward women. A decision is pending and, if granted, would postpone the deportation.

According to Fletcher, Medrano's family has been in contact with staff from several members of Congress, including Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Palo Alto). Fletcher said Eshoo's staff had called Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) and the Board of Immigration Appeals.

"Her office has been very helpful," said Fletcher. "It was her office that informed us that [Medrano] would not be put on a plane this week." When called to confirm, a member of Eshoo's staff told Mountain View Patch that they do not comment on constituent casework.

ICE spokesperson Virginia Kice said in an email statement that "Over the course of the last four and a half years, Medrano's case has undergone exhaustive review by judges at all levels of our legal system."

"In those proceedings, the courts have consistently held that Ms. Medrano failed to establish a legal basis to remain in the United States," said Kice. "Medrano remains in ICE custody while the agency makes arrangements for her return to El Salvador where two of her children reside."

Fletcher said Medrano left El Salvador in 1995, because her husband beat her regularly and abused her daughters, niece and nephew. He punished the children by submerging them in corn and pinning them down with bricks. He once broke Medrano's oldest daughter's nose and, in another incident, tore her nephew's earlobe. He threatened Medrano and the children with death and strangled her with a belt.

When she tried to report the attempt on her life, an El Salvadoran policeman told her, "We can't do anything, because it's your husband."

After several years in the United States, Fletcher confirmed that Medrano had received [temporary protected status](#) (TPS) in 2001, after an earthquake struck El Salvador. The immigration status is granted to undocumented and eligible

immigrants when their homeland suffers a natural disaster and would be burdened by taking in deported individuals. Under TPS, Medrano was able to remain in the United States and obtain work authorization.

However, a series of vehicular misdemeanors in 2002 and 2003 revoked her TPS, and deportation procedures began once again. Fletcher said that Medrano ran out of money trying to appeal the convictions and could not afford to apply for asylum at that time.

"There are changed circumstances now," Fletcher said, that could help her apply for asylum. "Her abuser is looking for her actively, and case law in the Ninth Circuit has changed with the [Perdomo case](#)."

Fletcher also pointed to a state department report in El Salvador that states, "[L]aws against domestic violence were not well enforced, and cases were not effectively prosecuted."

Cano said she told homeland security officers, "If you send her to El Salvador, I will never see her again." She asked them to let Medrano remain in the U.S., even if it must be behind bars.

Homeland security, however, has cited the increased number of female legislators in El Salvador and the provision of some domestic violence training to police to show that the government protects women from violence.

But that doesn't mean life has improved for women there, according to [Karen Musalo](#), director of the Center for Gender and Refugee Studies at the University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco.

"It is totally, verifiably false to say that conditions for women in El Salvador have improved," said Musalo, who has just completed an investigation of conditions for women in El Salvador.

Medrano's plea shows she fears returning to El Salvador.

"I know that if I am forced to return to El Salvador, I will face certain torture or even death," she said in her motion to the justice department.

"I believe that women deserve respect. We are mothers, and we fight for our children, and we are often left by men in order to care for our children by ourselves.

"I do not want to be forced to return to El Salvador, where I am afraid that I will be horribly abused because I am a woman. I refuse to endure this type of treatment any further."

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