

Hunger Strikers at the Adelanto Detention Facility in California, Latest to Join National Outcry

What: EMERGENCY Press Conference/Rally Regarding #AdelantoHungerStrike

When: Thursday, November 5th at 4pm

Where: 10400 Rancho Rd. Adelanto, CA 92301

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(ADELANTO, CA) — Family members of people detained at the GEO Group's immigration detention facility in Adelanto, California, have announced that at least, 20 men in the facility began refusing food Friday (10/28), and are asking for support from the public, for the # **AdelantoHungerStrike**. Community groups have been demanding the closure of the Adelanto Detention Facility since 2012, when the GEO Group started contracting with U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE). *"Since the opening of the Adelanto Detention facility in 2011, we've heard from countless individuals on the inadequate health care and denial of basic services. With two deaths under its belt, Adelanto continues to be prime location for humanitarian abuses. Inland Empire advocates stand in solidarity with those in the hunger strike and support their efforts to bring changes in the facility."* says Luis Nolasco, advocate with the ACLU of Southern California and Steering Member of the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ICIJ).

The 20 men participating in the #AdelantoHungerStrike include asylum seekers, who have come to this county, seeking protections from the conditions in their own countries, as well as valuable members of our community that wish nothing more than to be reunited with their families. Instead, due to the Immigration Quota, legislation proposed by and for private prison companies, they they have been locked up in the for-profit GEO Group Facility, and suffer from abuses.

The men participating in the peaceful disobedience, wrote about condition changes that they wish to see, as well as more humane treatment for themselves and their loved ones that come to visit them. In the handwritten letter, they outline issues with food, medical care, and the grievance policies. They also demand respect for their families, and proper treatment from the GEO guards, and remind everyone, ***"We are detainees, and not prisoners!"***

The #AdelantoHungerStrike is the fourth hunger strike at a U.S. immigration detention facility in less than 3 weeks. On the morning of October 14th, 54 South Asian asylum seekers from Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan refused

food and water at the El Paso detention center in Texas. Five days later, another 14 Indian and Bangladeshi immigrants began a solidarity hunger strike at the Lasalle Detention Center in Louisiana. On October 28th, 27 women at the T. Don Hutto Facility, a facility in Taylor, Texas, run by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), also began a hunger strike.

Jan Meslin, the Director of Social Change for Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), a national network of visitation programs, including *Friends of Adelanto Detainees*, which visits at the Adelanto Detention Facility, has been in close communication with hunger strikers around the country. “*Over the last two weeks, I have visited men at El Paso and LaSalle while they were on hunger strike. They remained hopeful, but it was so difficult to watch them. I saw them weak from hunger, beaten down by the system that threw many of them into solitary confinement in reaction to them exercising a First Amendment right. As these men at Adelanto launch this fourth hunger strike, we want to remind ICE and GEO Group officials that we are watching for retaliation and we will not stand by if they retaliate against any of these brave people, trying to highlight the horrid conditions of their captivity.*”

Immigration detention is a complex and debilitating system. In immigration detention, people are expected to fight their own complicated legal cases with little to no representation from an attorney, and are subjected to countless abuses.

As our friends at Grassroots Leadership who are supporting the women on Hunger Strike at Hutto facility said, “*Justice in this context can only mean liberty.*”

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