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Contact:

Maru Mora Villalpando, NWDC Resistance: resistenciasolidarity@gmail.com and 206-251-6658

Hunger Strike Continues at Northwest Detention Center As GEO Retaliates With Worsening Food

Tacoma, WA – Today, over a dozen individuals detained at Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) continued a hunger strike to call attention to the abysmal conditions at the facility, which have only gotten worse since Trump took office. More immigrants plan to join the hunger strike this weekend.

Men and women detained at the facility have reported the quality of the food has deteriorated in the last few days, potentially in response to their activism. The NWDC, which is located on a superfund site, is the largest immigrant detention center on the West Coast, caging over 1500 immigrants while awaiting civil deportation proceedings. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contracts with The GEO Group, a multinational private prison corporation, to run the facility, and hunger strikers aimed their demands at both the federal government and the private contractor. NWDC has been a frequent target of immigrant activists since a March 2014 hunger strike involving 1200 detainees first brought international notoriety to the immigration prison.

Detention conditions have worsened under the Trump administration, triggering this latest strike, which started on April 10. Trump has staffed his deportation force with openly anti-immigrant officials with links to white supremacist organizations, leaving people detained with little choice but to put their bodies on the line to fight for their basic dignity. Attorney General Jeff Session's newly released memorandum calling for increased prosecutions of immigrants and their supporters, combined with a roll-out where he referred to immigrants as "filth," highlights the continued need for local resistance to the federal deportation and detention dragnet.

Hunger Striker's Demands

- Change the food menu to meet basic nutritional needs.
- Lower commissary prices.
- Improve hygiene, including providing clean clothing and the ability to wash clothes in soap and water.
- Increase recreation time.
- Make educational and other programs available to allow long-term detainees to continue learning.
- Improve medical attention.
- Increase wages for working detainees from the current rate of \$1 per day.
- Help speed up the legal process for detainees. Many are held for weeks before they even have an initial hearing to review their charges.
- Provide contact visits, so parents can hug their children.

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