

**For Immediate Release:  
April 25, 2017**

*Contact:*

Maru Mora Villalpando, 206-251-6658

Wendy Pantoja, 253-468-5822

## **Detainees Begin Third Week on Hunger Strike because GEO Lied in Negotiations, Call on City of Tacoma to Address Worsening Conditions**

**What:** Rally and testimony Calling for Revocation of GEO's license to run NWDC

**When:** 4 pm Rally, 5:15 City Council Public Hearing

**Where:** Tacoma Municipal Building; City Council Chambers; 747 Market Street, First Floor;  
Tacoma, WA 98402

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Tacoma, WA – On Sunday, April 23, women detained at the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) ended their hunger strike to call attention to worsening nutrition and sanitation conditions. Their unmet demands included properly cleaned laundry, adequate medical care, reasonable commissary prices, raising the \$1 per day prison wage, more nutritional cafeteria food, and contact visits "so parents can hug their children."

GEO Group representatives promised to improve food to meet basic nutritional standards after the first week on strike. Instead, the food has gotten worse and GEO has retaliated against hunger strikers. They believe that GEO and ICE retaliated against hunger strikers by transferring at least four hunger strikers to NORCOR corrections facility in Oregon. They announce that 40 men will go on hunger strike today, calling on GEO and ICE keep their promises.

The abysmal conditions point to the ongoing danger the NWDC to the public health, safety and welfare of the individuals involved, as well as the community as a whole. The NWDC, which is located on a Superfund site, is the largest immigrant detention center on the West Coast, caging over 1,500 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. GEO Group also runs the monopoly commissary store, which detainees are boycotting, calling on GEO to use its exclusive sale rights at reasonable prices. Hunger strikes have aimed their demands at the federal government and the private contractor, and are now reaching out to Tacoma City authorities.

The Trump administration has staffed the ICE 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. At the same time, local governments like the City of Tacoma have the ability to choose their own destiny. City

government has the power to change municipal codes to ensure that for-profit detention facilities cannot expand into heavy industrial zones that pose environmental hazards, and that existing facilities comply with environmental and public health requests for monitoring and remediation. All people have a basic human right to health.

The most recent hunger strikes, part of a history of hunger strikes and activism that dates back years, signals that the NWDC does not meet city, county and state regulations for health and safety. This alone is enough for Tacoma's Finance Director to revoke GEO Group's business license to operate the NWDC.

Supporters have announced a rally before City Council's public hearing on "Correctional Facilities Interim Regulations." NWDCR organizers will also submit petitions with over 500 signatures and over 20 community group co-signatures to City Council calling on them to act to protect community health and safety.

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