



Immigration Advocates: ICE, GEO Mesa Verde Contract Raises Transparency and Accountability Concerns

Immigration advocates in California are deeply alarmed over the legality of a newly announced \$19 million contract between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and GEO Group, Inc. to continue the operations of the Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield, California. Following the City of McFarland's decision to end its contract with ICE, which had made the city an intermediary between ICE and GEO, the facility faced closure because California's Dignity Not Detention Act prohibits any new state or local government contracts for ICE detention.

ICE did not provide any information in advance of the sudden announcement that a direct contract had already been entered into by ICE and GEO, despite numerous inquiries from stakeholders. Critically, the direct contract was entered into without the competitive bidding process required by federal law. ICE cited "unusual and compelling urgency" as the basis for circumventing the usual and mandatory bidding requirements and executing the one-year contract.

In response to the complete lack of transparency that has taken place with regard to the fate of the Mesa Verde facility and ICE's execution of a direct, multimillion-dollar contract with the notorious GEO Group, a coalition of advocates issued the following statement:

Mesa Verde Detention Facility is yet another example of ICE and private prison companies keeping the public in the dark in order to continue profiting off of the mass incarceration of immigrants. Following months of inquiries by congressional offices, community advocates and the media regarding the future of the facility, ICE has shown it is incapable of transparency and accountability. The recent unilateral contract executed by ICE and GEO Group raises serious state and federal legal questions that warrant immediate inquiry and action. The one year, \$19,377,500 agreement was based on dubious legal authority and seems to be solely focused on continuing the operation of this facility, regardless of legal restrictions, procedures, or the well-being of detained individuals.

In attempting to justify the contract, ICE claimed: "Delaying award of a sole-source contract would require ICE to relocate almost 400 detainees to other facilities, some with serious medical conditions, only to be relocated once the new contract is awarded. This would result in serious injury to the detainees as well as incur an unnecessary serious financial burden to cover the cost of relocating such a large population."

ICE's statement misleadingly suggests that there are no alternatives to detention for the nearly 400 individuals at Mesa Verde and that the only solution is to reward a corporation set up to profit from civil detention. The for-profit detention of immigrants is reprehensible and dehumanizing, and our federal government should be held accountable for its underhanded award of millions, in circumvention of federal law, to a corporation that recorded revenues of \$2.33 billion in 2018, while being sued for forcing immigrants to work for \$1 a day in their facilities.

The fact that ICE used the medical conditions of detained individuals as part of the legal basis to bypass the public bidding process is bitterly ironic, as ICE has the power to free those with serious medical needs from detention, and yet refuses to do so. In addition, the California Attorney General's office released a report on detention conditions this month, which noted that the most recent inspection of Mesa Verde by ICE's own Office of Detention Oversight found the facility deficient with regard to medical care.

ICE should not be allowed to outsource the dirty work of immigration detention to third parties outside the bounds of federal law and without transparency. We demand that ICE take full responsibility for the detention apparatus and deportation machine that it has created. If it is unwilling to do so then it must accept freedom as the only alternative to the dehumanization and detention of immigrants.

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Signatories:

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2. California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance: Home - CIYJA
3. Northern California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice (NCCIJ)

4. A. L. Costa Community Development. Ctr.
5. Action Team for Immigrants' Rights UUC Ventura
6. African Advocacy Network
7. Alianza Americas
8. Alianza Sacramento
9. Arab Resource & Organizing Center
10. Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles
11. Asian Law Caucus: Asian Americans Advancing Justice
12. Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CVIIC)
13. Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach
14. Bend the Arc: Jewish Action of Southern California
15. Buen Vecino
16. California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation
17. Carecen of Northern CA
18. Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
19. Catholic Worker Movement
20. Center for Gender & Refugee Studies – California
21. Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
22. Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
23. Council on American-Islamic Relations-Central California
24. Dolores Street Community Services
25. Education and Leadership Foundation
26. Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin
27. Faith in the Valley
28. Fiesta Familiar de la Costa Central
29. Friends of Broward Detainees
30. Houston DSA EcoSocialists
31. Humboldt Rapid Response Network
32. Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
33. Coastside Immigration Action Group
34. Immigration Committee of National Lawyers Guild SF Chapter
35. Immigration Task Force of Monterey County
36. Indivisible San Fernando Valley
37. Innovation Law Lab
38. Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
39. Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
40. Justice & Diversity Center of The Bar Association of San Francisco
41. Kehilla Community Synagogue
42. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
43. Kern Welcoming and Extending Solidarity to Immigrants
44. La Raza Centro Legal, San Francisco
45. Los Angeles Raids Rapid Response Network
46. La Raza Community Resource Center
47. LAGAI -- Queer Insurrection
48. Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
49. Legal Services for Children
50. Ministers of Claremont United Church of Christ
51. Mujeres Unidas y Activas: MUA
52. NorCal Resist
53. North Bay Organizing Project
54. North Bay Rapid Response Network: Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties
55. Northern California Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association
56. University of San Francisco immigration and deportation defense clinic
57. Northern California Rapid Response and Immigrant Defense Network (NCRRIDN)
58. Immigrant Center for Women and Children (ICWC)
59. Oakland Community Organizations
60. Oakland Law Collaborative
61. Orange County Rapid Response Network
62. Pacifica Social Justice
63. Pajaro Valley Rapid Response Network
64. Pangea Legal Services
65. Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT!)
66. Rapid Response Network in Santa Clara County
67. Rapid Response Network of Monterey County
68. Refugee Support Network

69. Resilience OC
70. San Diego Rapid Response Network
71. SFV Indivisible - Immigration
72. California Raid's Response Steering Committee
73. Social Justice Collaborative
74. Southern Central Coast Rapid Response Network
75. Step Up! Sacramento
76. The Multicultural Center of Marin
77. UFW Foundation
78. United Now for Immigrant Rights
79. Watsonville Law Center
80. WE Rise SF/ Labor Center for Immigrant Justice

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