

Free All Immigrant Detainees

Stop the Mass Outbreak and Spread of COVID-19 in Detention Centers

Shut Down the Concentration Camps and Stop I.C.E. Raids Now

Whereas,

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitates, with the greatest urgency, the immediate release of I.C.E. detainees from detention facilities. With high concentrations of populations in crowded spaces, detention centers and jails are sites at major risk to rapidly spread disease and pandemics.

The tragic and preventable deaths in I.C.E. detention centers that have already occurred at our Southern border resulted from unhealthy close quarters, the lack of medical care, food, water, and squalid conditions with no soap, where people were even forced to drink out of toilets.

These conditions predate the Coronavirus outbreak and guarantee the exponential spread of the disease among a population already in poor health and extremely vulnerable. Detainees are not provided with basic soap and water, let alone masks or hand sanitizer. To continue to hold immigrants in such dangerous conditions during a global pandemic is tantamount to genocide.

Federal prisons and many state prisons have banned visitations, including most attorney visits, citing the obvious potential for the spread of the virus among prisoners and staff in close quarters. Rather than denying detainees their rights to visitation and proper legal representation, they must be released from these dangerous and deadly conditions where they are certain to be exposed to the virus through guards, other prison staff, through food coming in, through new inmates and through those who have already been exposed as of this moment.

In the meantime, I.C.E. agents over the past week have continued to make arrests in some of the regions hardest hit by the virus, including California and New York. These actions, combined with the continued imprisonment of tens of thousands of immigrants and asylum seekers in dangerously unhealthy conditions, make clear how this administration's main policy is racism, not public health.

Donald Trump's denial of science, spreading of lies and xenophobia, active blocking of mass testing, etc. has made the U.S. the most ill-prepared of any industrialized country to deal with this crisis. We certainly have many more positive cases than we know. This makes the release of detainees a matter of life and death.

Therefore Be It Resolved That:

1. In the context of the particularly acute danger of catastrophic COVID-19 spread in detention facilities, the Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT) calls on Governor Newsom to use his power to immediately release I.C.E. detainees from detention facilities. We also call for all the release of all immigrant detainees from I.C.E. detentions across the country.
2. The BFT calls for an immediate end to all I.C.E. raids.
3. The BFT will take this resolution to the CFT to ask for their support. We will also bring this to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and specifically to the 2020 AFT Convention, should that body convene.

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Equal Opportunity Now/By Any Means Necessary Caucus (EON/BAMN)