UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Free All Detainees NOW! Shut Down Covid19 Death Camps! Surround Calhoun County Jail w/Cars

1 message

Kate Stenvig <kstenvig@umich.edu> Sat, Mar 28, 2020 at 5:45 PM
To: BAMN Info List <bamn-list@umich.edu>

RELEASE ALL DETAINEES & CLOSE THE DEATH CAMPS NOW!

SURROUND CALHOUN COUNTY JAIL WITH CARS!
MONDAY, MARCH 30 @ 3PM
185 E. MICHIGAN AVE, BATTLE CREEK, MI 49014

Bring signs to post in your car windows, spread the word to bring out as many cars as possible!

Governor Whitmer: You have the power to stop thousands of people from dying; Use it now or Blood will be on your hands.

Trump and Pence must go NOW BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!

Michigan has become an epicenter for rapid spread of the Coronavirus. For the tens of thousands of people stuck in immigration detention, in federal, state and county jails in Michigan and nationwide, the recommended "shelter-in-place" policy is nothing but a death sentence waiting to happen. Social distancing is impossible in jails, in which high concentrations of people are forced to share small jail cells in bunk beds or pods of 25 people, forced to eat together, shower together, etc.

Detainees at Calhoun County, St. Clair County and other Michigan County Jails have reported that people are already sick, and they are not provided with basic soap, which they have to buy out of pocket from the commissary, let alone masks or hand sanitizer.

Oliver Awshana, Iraqi refugee who is detained by ICE at Calhoun County Jail reports:

"I told the guards I was sick with a sore throat, chills and sweats and asked to be taken to the hospital almost a week ago and was told I probably had allergies and sent back with everyone else. I fought and stopped my deportation flight to Iraq because I knew it was my death sentence. I won my case in immigration court, but I am still in detention, now facing another death sentence from the coronavirus. I am not only fighting for my own life, but for every other immigrant and everyone else here with me who can be infected and could die. We all need to be released now - none of us deserve to die."

Hundreds of ICE officers have been quarantined and 19 ICE employees now have confirmed cases of COVID-19 among employees. Given the long incubation period and high level of contagiousness, there is no doubt that many detainees have already been exposed - it is a ticking time bomb.

BAMN has filed Habeas Corpus Petitions for the release of Iraqi detainees Ali Al-Sadoon, Oliver Awshana and Wisam Hamana. Oliver has won his case, one of the rare cases in which the immigration judge determined torture and death if he is deported. Wisam and Ali have both won stays of deportation.

The tragic and preventable deaths from flu and other infectious diseases in I.C.E. detention centers at our southern border were the result of close quarters allowing disease to spread rapidly, the lack of medical care, food and water, squalid conditions with no soap, people being forced to drink out of toilets, etc. These conditions guarantee the exponential spread of the coronavirus among a population already in poor health and extremely vulnerable.

To continue to hold immigrants in such dangerous conditions during a global pandemic is tantamount to genocide.

Immigrant detainees are already holding hunger strikes in multiple facilities nationwide in response to the worsening crisis. In Hudson County Detention Center in New Jersey, as of March 25th, as the hunger strikers went into their 5th day, demanding basic hygienic supplies like soap, toilet paper and disinfectants, the facility was placed on a 14-day lockdown after two cases of COVID-19 were confirmed, one detainee and one staff member. But to wait for confirmed cases at any given facility, like in New Jersey, is already too late, especially given the lack of available tests, reluctance to test detainees and prejudice and racism against these populations. With the current levels of grossly racist disregard for the lives of almost 40,000 immigrant detainees in the U.S., nothing short of prison riots will have to take place for the Government to intervene, and anger is rightfully growing and escalating in detention centers for this has become for detainees a life or death struggle.

New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, Texas and California, and other states have started releasing detainees from local and county jails, recognizing the health hazards for detainees and staff in jails, especially those with grave medical conditions. Fourteen senators from both parties also have sent a letter to the Justice Department, in charge of federal prisons, asking them to use their full power to release detainees to home confinement--including Sens. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.), Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.). The New Jersey Supreme Court agreed with the Attorney General, the County Prosecutor Office, and Public Defender's Association to release over 1,000 inmates in response to the COVID-19 crisis. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio just announced plans to release about 300 nonviolent inmates from Rikers Island after the city's first prisoner tested positive for the coronavirus last week.