

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 20, 2020

Contact:

Juan Prieto, jprieto@ciyja.org, 510-414-0953

Yuba: Luis Angel, luisangel@pangealegal.org, 415-635-4931

Mesa Verde: Jesus Chavez, jchavez@centrolegal.org, 510-947-9911

As California fires rage, undocumented immigrants hold indefinite hunger strike and solidarity action at two separate detention facilities as COVID-19 outbreak ravages majority of detainees

Immigrants launch indefinite hunger strike at Yuba County Jail condemning deplorable conditions while more than half of those detained at Mesa Verde Detention Facility are currently infected with COVID-19 following previous labor strikes and hunger strikes

CALIFORNIA — Despite worsening air quality due to regional fires, detained undocumented immigrants at the Yuba County Jail began an indefinite hunger strike this Wednesday morning in response to deplorable conditions at the facility. From arbitrary restrictions to yardtime implemented by Captain Allan Garza, to the mixing of populations of immigrant detainees with recently detained criminalized individuals—a practice that ignores COVID-19 distancing restrictions and common sense practice—the fires ravishing Northern California are the least of concerns for immigrants detained at the jail 30 minutes away from the Nevada City fire.

“We’re already hearing from hunger strike leaders that **Captain Garza has begun to retaliate against them by taking hygienic products and even beverages from them.** This is a violation to the 4.2 Hunger Strike National Detention Standards, in which ‘staff are required to provide an adequate amount of water or other liquids’” urges Itzel Calvo, deportation defense organizer with the California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance. “Folks have been organizing inside detention centers across California for five months now, and no significant change is being enacted by state or locally elected leaders. The folks inside felt escalation was needed, even though the air quality poses extra health risks.”

That’s why the hunger strike at Yuba County Jail will go on indefinitely, or until folks detained inside get a meeting with Captain Garza to further discuss COVID-19 precautionary measures.

Simultaneously, individuals held at the Mesa Verde Detention Facility in Bakersfield are demanding an end to similar practices ignoring isolation measures as ICE finally confirms that there is a coronavirus outbreak inside the facility, with more than half of the detainees held at the facility testing positive for the disease. Despite this extremely alarming and damning statistic, ICE and GEO Group are doing nothing to stop the spread, and are instead exacerbating conditions to spread the disease, like limiting cleaning efforts and mixing populations of infected folks with those who are not infected.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 20, 2020

Two rallies in support of the strikers are being organized by community advocates in **Yuba County and Kern County, where Mesa Verde Detention Facility** sits. Rallies are set to commence **Friday, August 21 from 7pm-10pm** outside of each facility.

Outside Mesa Verde Detention Facility, the *Kern Youth Abolitionist*'s are leading a car show in solidarity with detained individuals, with local car clubs doing a honk-and-drive and posters of detained individuals held inside on display.

Outside Yuba County Jail, community members will read testimonies and demands from folks inside, including demanding Captain Allan Garza stop Yuba's unsanitary and unsafe practices.

###