



Protesters rally at Adelanto Detention Facility, demanding that a visitation program be reinstated

About 50 people from various Southern California counties rallied on Aug. 6 in front of the Adelanto Detention Facility to demand a visitation program to be reinstated immediately at three different sites, including two in Orange County

Holding signs that read "End ICE-Solation," "Let Us Visit," and "Friendship is Magic," among others, protesters asked the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to bring back visitation programs at the Adelanto Facility, Santa Ana City Jail and James A. Musick Facility.

"Every day, our fathers and brothers, our sisters and mothers disappear from our communities and are detained by the U.S. government. They are confined in jails like Santa Ana City Jail and Musick and for-profit prisons like Adelanto Detention Center. Our families and friends are locked up right here behind these prison walls and now we are being told we can't even visit them. Is this the type of country you want to live in, a country that detains our loved ones and the tries to hide them from our sight?" said attorney Christina Fialho, co-founder of Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), which organized the event.

Fialho added that by shutting access to detained people, the government is betraying the freedom of speech values and the rights of people which the U.S. Constitution protects.

"We are being denied the right to continue to visit our friends because we spoke up when we saw mistreatment, we blogged about the lack of training for officers at the Santa Ana City Jail, we sent messages to our friends and family through Facebook asking them to join us. Instead of responding to us by trying to fix the system or engaging in a dialogue with us, the government has tried to silence us, tried to prevent us from telling the world why this is being done to our loved ones in the false name of a freer and safer United States," said Fialho, whose parents immigrated from Portugal, escaping a dictatorship.

The visitation program was implemented in mid-July, but on July 24 leaders received a message from ICE stating the program was being suspended.

Victoria Mena, who oversees the Friends of Adelanto Detainees, said the visitations help people psychological and morally and that suspending them is unjust and inhumane.

"I visited a 19-year-old man once who for three months received no visit from nobody. Just to be there and listen to what they have to say is enough. Many people have no family in the country and many have families who can't afford to travel to Adelanto. This program should be reinstated now," said Mena. "We don't receive funding from the government and we never signed anything saying that we wouldn't speak up when we see abuses or when we are concerned for our friends in detention."

----- ON WEDNESDAY, ICE officials released this statement to the Herald News:

"U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials are conducting further review of the Friends of Adelanto Detainees program and plan ongoing discussion with the group's leadership on how the program can be most beneficial to those in ICE custody.

"U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is committed to transparency and community engagement. Through the agency's Community Outreach Program, ICE has built robust relationships with community stakeholders at the national and local levels including the public, non-governmental

organizations, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, attorneys, and advocacy groups. Each and every day, ICE Community Outreach coordinates and conducts numerous community stakeholder tours and visits in one of our many immigration detention facilities across the country."