
Detainees protest medical neglect, high bond amounts with brief hunger strike

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ADELANTO — Nearly 40 detainees at the Adelanto Detention Facility went on a brief hunger strike this week in protest of their poor treatment at the facility, according to an immigration watchdog group.

The strike began Wednesday morning and involved a group of 29 women detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Adelanto facility, according to a statement from Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), a national immigration detention advocacy organization.

The detainees began the hunger strike to protest the conditions at the facility, including medical neglect and unreasonably high bond amounts keeping them in detention.

“This facility has a well-documented and egregious record of substandard medical care and abuse. It is no surprise, given the facility is run by a for-profit company,” CIVIC co-executive director Christina Mansfield stated. “The facility must be shut down and we must end our cruel, profit-driven immigration detention system nationwide.”

It's the second such strike to occur at the facility this week, CIVIC says. A group of men started a hunger strike on Monday, it said. After officially beginning their strike with a demand letter, the men were allegedly beaten, “drenched in pepper-spray” and placed in solitary confinement, according to CIVIC.

([HTTPS://VCTISERVICES.DTICLOUD.COM/CGI-BIN/CMO_C](https://vctiservices.dticloud.com/cgi-bin/cmoc)

ICE officials acknowledged that several detainees had declared their intention to begin hunger strikes on Monday and Wednesday. Monday's strike was broken by Wednesday afternoon, while Wednesday's strike ended that evening, according to ICE spokeswoman Virginia Kice.

Kice said Monday's incident began after a group of nine men "staged a disturbance" in which they refused to return to their assigned beds for the morning count and continually defied officers' demands.

Pepper spray was deployed against them after "repeated efforts to avoid confrontation," according to an ICE statement. Eight of the nine men involved subsequently declared their intention to begin a hunger strike. However, Kice said they had all resumed eating by Wednesday afternoon.

"The assertion by advocates that the men involved in this disturbance were 'drenched' with pepper spray and 'beaten' is a gross and regrettable exaggeration," Kice said in an email.

The men indicated they were frustrated by the "slow" progress of their cases, ICE officials said.

The women behind Wednesday's strike refused both breakfast and lunch that day, Kice said, but were reported to have commenced eating by Thursday morning. They continued to have access to commissary items, including beverages and snacks.

"ICE personnel at the facility have been meeting with the women to get a better understanding of their concerns," Kice said.

According to CIVIC, the women state that they are "systematically facing medical neglect" at the facility. Their statement mentioned one detainee, Norma Gutierrez, who has had multiple strokes during her time at the facility. Instead of receiving the proper treatment, Gutierrez was placed in solitary confinement, CIVIC claimed.

The group was also protesting what they deemed was a lack of basic respect from facility guards and ICE, as well as unreasonably high bond amounts that keep women separated from their families while ensuring a "steady stream of profit" for the GEO group, which operates the facility.

“Some women who are currently detained are still breastfeeding,” CIVIC said.

“The women understand that they are being separated from their children because their incarceration is profitable for contractors like the GEO Group, not because they are any danger to society.”

As of Thursday afternoon, there were no hunger strikes at Adelanto, Kice confirmed. ICE does not consider a strike lasting less than 72 hours as a “hunger strike,” and hunger strike protocols aren’t initiated until then, Kice said.

During these protocols, all detainees involved will continue to be offered three meals daily and provided an adequate supply of drinking water or other beverages, along with close medical supervision during the duration of the strike.

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