

*VIA Email Delivery Only*

March 6, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Mr. Tae D. Johnson  
Acting Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

**Re: End Immigration Detention Contracts Expiring in 2023**

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Acting Director Johnson:

We, the undersigned groups, call on you to end all Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention contracts expiring in 2023. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Alamance County Jail** (North Carolina), was set to expire on 1/31/2023
- **Webb County Detention Center** (Texas), was set to expire on 2/28/2023
- **Sherburne County Jail** (Minnesota), set to expire on 5/2/2023
- **Caroline Detention Facility** (Virginia), set to expire on 6/30/2023
- **Laredo Processing Center** (Texas), set to expire on 6/30/2023
- **Monroe County Detention - Dorm** (Michigan), set to expire on 6/30/2023
- **Okmulgee County Jail** (Oklahoma), set to expire on 7/16/2023
- **El Valle Detention Facility** (Texas), set to expire on 7/17/2023
- **Elizabeth Contract Detention Facility** (New Jersey), set to expire on 8/31/2023
- **Joe Corley Processing Center** (Texas), set to expire on 8/31/2023
- **ICA Farmville Detention Center** (Virginia), set to expire on 9/15/2023
- **Plymouth County Correctional Facility** (Massachusetts), set to expire on 9/21/2023

On the campaign trail, President Biden promised to prioritize the dignity of immigrants and those seeking safety in the United States. As he took office in January 2021, the [number of people in ICE detention had decreased to approximately 15,000](#) (due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the previous administration's anti-asylum policies). These historically low numbers provided the Biden administration with an opportunity to chart a new path. Instead, the number of people detained began increasing again after the first month of President Biden's term. In addition, on the campaign trail President Biden [committed to ending the use of private immigration detention centers](#), but his January 2021 Executive Order phasing out federal private prisons excluded facilities used by DHS to detain immigrants and at least [one of the facilities](#) closed under the executive order has been converted to an ICE facility.

While we welcome the steps the administration has taken by ending the use of Bristol County Correctional Facility, Irwin County Detention Center, Etowah County Detention Center, Berks County Residential Center, and Yuba County Jail, ICE detention has continued to expand, detention numbers have nearly doubled, and conditions remain dire. As of February 21, 2023, [there were 27,257 people in detention](#).

For decades, government oversight agencies, media outlets, and local advocates have [documented inhumane conditions, mistreatment, abuse, inadequate medical care](#), and death at immigration detention facilities nationwide. The ICE facilities with contracts expiring this year are no exception.

For example, El Valle Detention Center in Raymondville, Texas is an infamous ICE detention facility of many names and histories of abuse. It was previously the Willacy County Processing Center and, when it opened in 2006, the largest ICE detention center in the country. Immigration advocates dubbed it “Tent City” or “Ritmo” due to the abusive conditions. In 2011, the facility was converted into a Bureau of Prisons facility and renamed the Willacy County Correctional Center. ICE was forced to close the facility in 2015 after [continued reports of abuse and protests by people incarcerated there](#) highlighted poor medical care, sexual abuse, and unsafe living conditions. In 2019, ICE reopened the facility under its current name, El Valle, but the problems continued. In July 2020, [40 women detained at El Valle went on a hunger strike](#), protesting the lack of cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment that could prevent exposure to COVID-19. El Valle's current contract is set to expire on July 17, 2023.

[In New Jersey, advocates have long supported the call for closure of the Elizabeth Contract Detention Facility](#). In August 2021, ICE quietly [extended the Elizabeth contract](#) to circumvent a New Jersey state law that would close the facility. Multiple reports have documented [unsafe living conditions and retaliation at the facility](#), including a [2018 report](#) from a team of researchers and legal and health professionals from Human Rights First that [highlighted the substandard medical care, poor food quality, and insufficient ventilation](#) that led to many immigrants' health problems. The Elizabeth contract is set to expire on August 31, 2023.

In addition, the ICA-Farmville Detention Center in Virginia, operated by the private prison corporation Immigration Centers of America, has a [years-long history of documented abuse and inhumane conditions](#), including the use of force by guards, retaliation for complaints, worms in the food provided to immigrants, and negligent medical care, including a failure to respond adequately to the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2020, [over 93% of people detained at Farmville tested positive for COVID-19, and one person died](#). As a result of [litigation](#) brought by people detained at Farmville during the pandemic, ICE is operating the facility at a fraction of its capacity, with [only 17 people detained there as of January 23, 2023](#). The contract is set to expire on September 15, 2023.

These are only a few examples of the abuses and harms of ICE detention across the United States. Empowered by the current and previous administrations to ignore and cover up these deadly conditions, ICE and the local entities and private prison corporations it contracts with continue to operate without repercussions, guaranteeing the facilities remain plagued by

systemic abuse. It has long been clear that immigration detention is a fundamentally flawed, inhumane, and unnecessary system that needs to end.

As the Biden administration is now halfway through its term, communities are looking to President Biden to deliver on his promises to bring fairness to the immigration system and reduce reliance on detention. The upcoming contract expirations provide another opportunity to do so. We urge you to decline to renew all detention contracts set to expire this year as a step towards fulfilling these promises. We also ask that you end the contracts for Alamance County Jail in North Carolina and Webb County Detention Center in Texas, both of which were set to expire earlier this year but were renewed.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter. As organizations representing and supporting people in ICE detention, including in the facilities listed above, we also request a meeting to further discuss the importance of ending these contracts.

We look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please contact Setareh Ghandehari, [sghandehari@detentionwatchnetwork.org](mailto:sghandehari@detentionwatchnetwork.org).

Sincerely,

Detention Watch Network

#DetentionKills

18 Million Rising

A4Abolitionist

Alianza Americas

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Friends Service Committee, Colorado

American Immigration Lawyers Association

APIC SPS

Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)

Association of Mexicans in North Carolina, Inc. (AMEXCAN)

Bend the Arc Jewish Action: South Jersey

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Pittsburgh

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Southern California

Bergen County Green Party

Bergen County Immigration Strategy Group

Bilbao Law LLC

Border Line Crisis Center

Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network

Buen Vecino

CA Collaborative for Immigrant Justice

California Coalition for Women Prisoners

Casa Freehold

Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants

Center for Law and Social Policy

Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War  
Church World Service  
Ciudadanos organizados  
Cleveland Jobs with Justice  
Coalición de Derechos Humanos  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)  
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice  
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)  
Community Asylum Seekers Project  
Comunidad Maya Pixan Ixim  
Conversations with Friends (of Minnesota)  
DIRE  
DIRE Legal Services  
Doctors For Camp Closure  
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC  
Dream Action Oklahoma  
El Centro Hispano, Inc.  
El Refugio  
El Vínculo Hispano/The Hispanic Liaison  
Envision Freedom Fund  
Espacio Migrante  
Essex County Community Organization  
Faith in Action (LA RED)  
Faith in New Jersey  
Families For Freedom  
FANG Collective  
First Friends of NJ & NY  
Free Migration Project  
Freedom for Immigrants (FFI)  
Freedom Network USA  
Freedom to Thrive  
Georgia Detention Watch  
Grassroots Leadership  
Guadalupe Presbyterian Church, USA  
Haitian Bridge Alliance  
Hartford Deportation Defense  
Home is Here NOLA  
HOPE CC  
Human Impact Partners (HIP)  
Human Rights First  
ICNA Council for Social Justice  
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Illustrac Impact LLC  
Immigrant Action Alliance  
Immigrant Defenders Law Center  
Immigrant Defense LLC

Immigrant Families Together  
Immigrant Justice Network  
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Immigrant Welcoming Working Group, Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis  
Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice  
Interfaith Campaign for Just Closures  
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity  
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio  
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western Massachusetts  
Jordy's Auto Service  
JPIC  
Juntos  
Justice Strategies  
La Unidad11  
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)  
League of Conservation Voters  
Long Beach Immigrant Rights Coalition  
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Make the Road NY  
Marianist Social Justice  
Mariposa Legal, program of COMMON Foundation  
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Migrant Center for Human Rights  
MN8  
MPower Change  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Counterpublics Lab  
N.Y.U. Review of Law and Social Change  
National Employment Law Project  
National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC)  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)  
National Lawyers Guild San Francisco Bay Area Chapter  
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights  
Never Again Action Boston  
Never Again Action DC  
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
New Jersey Forum for Human Rights  
No Detention Centers in Michigan  
NorCal Resist  
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)  
North Carolina Justice Center  
North New Jersey Democratic Socialists of America

Northern New Jersey Sanctuary Coalition  
NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic  
Occupy Bergen County  
Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
Orange County Equality Coalition  
Organize! Ohio  
Parishioners for Peace & Justice of St. Peter Claver Church, Montclair, NJ  
Parole Preparation Project  
Pax Christi Illinois  
Pax Christi New Jersey  
Pax Christi New York State  
Pax Christi Northwest  
Pax Christi USA  
Peace and Freedom Party  
Poder Latinx  
Poligon Education Fund  
Prisoners' Legal Services of MA  
Public Counsel  
Puerto Rican Nation  
Pulmonary and Sleep Associates Of Marin  
Rising Voices  
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights  
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network  
San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium  
Sanctuary and Resistance to Injustice  
SARI  
Showing Up for Racial Justice  
Society of the flora, fauna & friend  
SOLACE  
Somos South Georgia  
South Bay People Power  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Southern California Immigration Project  
St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America  
Strengthening Sanctuary Alliance  
Struggle for Miami's Affordable and Sustainable Housing (SMASH)  
SURJ NYC  
The Bronx Defenders  
The Mami Chelo Foundation  
Transformations CDC  
Tsuru for Solidarity  
UndocuBlack Network  
Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ  
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice  
United We Dream  
UU Mass Action

UUFHCT  
Vecindarios901  
Vermont Interfaith Action  
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)  
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center  
Women's Refugee Commission