

January 20, 2012

Mr. John Morton
Department of Homeland Security

Re: Terminating ICE detention contracts with the Pinal County Jail

Dear Mr. Morton:

Since 2005, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has used the Pinal County Jail (PCJ) in Florence, Arizona to detain immigrants facing removal proceedings. The total jail capacity is 1,540, with 625 beds contracted to ICE to detain adult men. Over the course of the past six years, we have seen the devastation that the immigration detention system, and this jail in particular, has created for communities, families, and individuals in Arizona. Furthermore, the continued use of Pinal County Jail for the purpose of civil immigration detention is wholly inconsistent with the stated priorities and minimum reforms set out by your office in 2009.

Therefore, the undersigned local and national organizations call on your office to immediately terminate the detention contract with Pinal County Jail.

While ICE officials and the agency's detention standards describe immigration detention as non-punitive, conditions at PCJ can only be described as extreme and abusive. Reports by the ACLU of Arizona, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the University of California-Davis School of Law, and Human Rights First document serious deficiencies in the operations and procedures at the Pinal County Jail in violation of the ICE detention standards.

Moreover, the conditions at the jail deprive individuals of basic human needs and do not meet universal standards for human rights. Local organizations and advocates meet and receive letters from people detained at PCJ describing inhumane conditions of confinement and human and civil rights abuses. Despite the information in the reports cited above and interventions at the local level, individuals held at this facility continue to express desperation and frustration over having no contact visits with loved ones, limitations on access to counsel, failure to make religious accommodations, no access to outdoor recreation, and abusive treatment, among other problems.

In its reform announcements in 2009, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) included as one of its immediate goals the following: "ICE will aggressively monitor and enforce contract performance in order to ensure contractors comply with terms and conditions — especially those related to conditions of confinement. When confronted with repeated contractual deficiencies, ICE will pursue all available avenues for remedying poor performance, including termination of contracts."

The culture and conditions at the Pinal County Jail are clearly punitive and harsh. There have been minimal changes at PCJ since the agency's statements over two years ago indicating a shift away from utilizing jail-like facilities. With repeated deficient ratings and serious problems

reported by people detained there, Pinal County Jail is a prime example of a facility that should not be utilized for immigration detention.

We call on the Department to terminate the contract with the Pinal County Jail to ensure that persons are no longer subjected to unsafe and cruel conditions.

If you have any questions or would like to follow up with us you may reach either Victoria Lopez with the ACLU of Arizona at 602-773-6011 or vlopez@acluaz.org or Carlos Garcia with the Puente Movement at 520-248-1697.

Signatories:
(as of 1/20/2012)

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Arizona
Arizona Dream Act Coalition
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
Coalición de Derechos Humanos
Detention Watch Network
Families for Freedom
Heartland Alliance's National Immigrant Justice Center.
Human Rights Defense Center
Immigrant Defense Project
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
Puente Movement
Standing on the Side of Love Team, Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation
The Restoration Project
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
University of California Davis School of Law Immigration Law Clinic

cc: Mr. Kevin Landy, Director
ICE Office of Detention Policy and Planning

Ms. Katrina Kane, Field Office Director
ICE Phoenix Field Office