

August 24, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Transfer of Detained Transgender Women to Adelanto Detention Facility

Dear President Obama,

We, the undersigned lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) rights, civil rights, and immigrant rights organizations, are extremely concerned about recent news that transgender women may soon be transferred to Adelanto Detention Facility in Southern California. Adelanto is run by the private GEO Group, which has a record of abusing detained people including transgender women.

Attorneys and formerly detained people have reported abuses including solitary confinement, denial of medical care, and pervasive sexual harassment of transgender women at GEO Group facilities, including the Joe Corley Detention Facility in Texasⁱ and the LaSalle Detention Facility in Louisiana.ⁱⁱ GEO Group cannot be trusted to care for transgender women or house them safely.

Adelanto Detention Facility itself also has a history of human rights abuses, including “egregious errors” in medical treatment.ⁱⁱⁱ Recently, a coalition of advocates led by the ACLU of Southern California filed a complaint with the Department of Homeland Security’s Civil Rights & Civil Liberties Division discussing extensive medical abuses against people with mental and physical health disabilities at the facility.^{iv} GEO Group has consistently denied or delayed necessary mental health treatment for people detained at Adelanto and shackled individuals during their psychiatric appointments.^v Staff’s negligence at this facility led directly to the death of at least one man, according to ICE’s Office of Professional Responsibility, and significant questions remain about whether another death^{vi} and other grave medical problems in the past year were due to the facility’s medical failures.

Adelanto Detention Facility’s documented failure to prevent or address sexual assault is especially alarming. A July 2014 investigation by the Office of Detention Oversight found that Adelanto’s sexual assault case files were missing essential information and that staff failed to inform victims that they would not be deported for reporting a sexual assault.^{vii} Transgender women are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault, being victimized at 9-10 times the rate of all persons in detention facilities according to Justice Department statistics.^{viii} Adelanto’s proven failures to address sexual assault, standing alone, would make it unacceptable to house vulnerable persons.

Adelanto is also extremely isolated from legal services and other social support systems and its geographical location will prevent independent oversight by visitation programs and transgender

advocacy groups. Due to its remote location, GEO Group's history of severe abuses committed against detained transgender women, and staff's medical and sexual assault abuses, Adelanto Detention Facility is not a safe place for transgender women.

Fundamentally, vulnerable individuals such as pregnant women, families with children, people living with HIV and LGBTQ immigrants should not be in ICE detention centers. Many LGBTQ immigrants enter the U.S. seeking safety, escaping persecution and abuse, and have a strong case to be granted asylum or related protections. The most humane and common-sense way to keep LGBTQ immigrants safe is not to detain them in the first place. Transferring some of these immigrants to a dangerous facility like Adelanto is a step in the wrong direction. We urge you to act immediately and stop abuses against transgender women.

Sincerely,

Affinity Community Services
American Civil Liberties Union (National)
American Federation of Teachers
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Americans for Immigrant Justice
API Equality-LA
Arcoiris Liberation Team
Arizona Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project
Asian American Advancing Justice-Los Angeles
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center (Allentown, PA)
California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance (CIYJA)
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition
Center for Community Change (CCC)
Center for Integration and Courageous Living
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Chicago LGBT Asylum Support Program (CLASP)
Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries (U.S. and Canada)
Colorado GLBT Bar Association
Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
DC Center for the LGBT Community
Detention Watch Network
Disciples Justice Action Network
DRM Action Coalition
Equality Arizona
Equality California
Equality Federation
Equality Illinois
Equality New Mexico
Equality Texas
Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement
First Existentialist Congregation Social Justice Guild

FORGE, Inc.
Friends of Adelanto Detainees
Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
GetEQUAL
GLAD Alliance
Grassroots Leadership
Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI)
Howard Brown Health Center (HBHC)
Immigrant Justice Network (Grant and Luna Counties, New Mexico)
Immigrant Youth Coalition
Immigration Equality
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Coalition
Invisible to Invincible: Asian Pacific Islanders Pride of Chicago (Chicago i2i)
Japanese American Citizens League
Lambda Legal
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
League of United Latin American Citizens
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center NYC
LGBT Center of Central PA
LGBT Center Orange County
LGBTQ Center of Long Beach
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Make the Road New York
Marriage Equality USA
Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center
MKE LGBT Community Center
National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Latina Institute Reproductive Health
National Lawyers Guild (National)
National Lawyers Guild- Los Angeles
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
New Sanctuary Coalition of NY
Our Family Coalition
Political Asylum/Immigration Representation Project
Pride at Work
Public Counsel
Public Law Center
Queer Detainee Empowerment Project
Racial Justice Action Center
RAD Remedy

Rainbow Community Center of Contra Costa County
Reformed Church of Highland Park, New Jersey
Resource Center
Salvadoran American National Network (SANN)
San Diego LGBT Community Center
Solutions Not Punishment Coalition (Atlanta, GA)
Southern Arizona Gender Alliance, Inc. (SAGA)
TGI Justice Project
The Association of Latino/as Motivating Action (ALMA)
The Black Institute
The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection
The LGBT Community Center of the Desert
The TransLatin@ Coalition
Trans Pride Initiative
Trans(forming) - Atlanta, GA
Transgender Law Center
Unite Here
United We Dream
US Human Rights Network (USHRN)
We Belong Together
Wilco Justice Alliance (Williamson County, TX)

ⁱ Lavers, Michael K. “Advocates protest ICE detention policies.” Washington Blade, May 28, 2015, available at <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2015/05/28/advocates-protest-ice-detention-policies/>

ⁱⁱ Costantini, Cristina, Jorge Rivas and Kristofer Ríos. “Why did the U.S. lock up these women with men?” Fusion, November 17, 2014, available at <http://interactive.fusion.net/trans/>

ⁱⁱⁱ ICE’s Office of Professional Responsibility determined that Mr. Dominguez’s death was caused by “egregious errors committed by ACF medical staff, including failure to perform proper physical examinations in response to symptoms and complaints, failure to pursue any records critical to continuity of care, and failure to facilitate timely and appropriate access to off-site treatments. ODO concluded the detainee’s death could have been prevented and that the detainee received an unacceptable level of medical care while detained at ACF.” Available at http://www.ice.gov/doclib/foia/odo-compliance-inspections/adelantoCorrectionalFac_Adelanto-CA-Sept_18-20-2012.pdf

^{iv} Southern California legal service providers and human rights organizations sign-on letter expressing concerns about the quality of health care provided to detained immigrants at Adelanto Detention Facility. May 15, 2015. Available at <https://www.aclusocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NGO-letter-re-Adelanto-medical-care.pdf>

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Linthicum, Kate. “Salvadoran immigrant held at Adelanto ICE facility dies,” LA Times, April 7, 2015, available at <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-detainee-death-20150407-story.html>

^{vii} Enforcement and Removal Operations, ERO Los Angeles Field Office, Adelanto Detention Facility, Adelanto, California. “Office of Detention Oversight Compliance Inspection.” July 8–10, 2014, available at <http://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/FOIA/2014/2014AdelantoJuly.pdf>

^{viii} In 2011–12, an estimated 4.0% of state and federal prison inmates and 3.2% of jail inmates reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another inmate or facility staff in the past 12 months or since admission to the facility, if less than 12 months. An estimated 35% of transgender inmates held in prisons and 34% held in local jails reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another inmate or facility staff in the past 12 months or since admission, if less than 12 months. Available at <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4654>