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Hunger Strike Victory: Washington State files suit against GEO Group, private prison company that owns Northwest Detention Center
\$1/day "Volunteer" Work Program Comes Under Fire

Tacoma, WA – The Attorney General of Washington announced a lawsuit today against the private prison profiteers, GEO Group, who own and run the Tacoma, Washington immigration prison, the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC). The lawsuit is a direct result of over three years of hunger strikes and work stoppages by people detained at the facility. There have been five hunger strikes so far in 2017, and whistle-blowers have faced repression from both Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and GEO Group, in the form of solitary confinement, threats of force-feeding, and retaliatory transfers to different facilities across the country. Today's lawsuit by the Attorney General represents a victory for hunger strikers, whose heroic efforts to bring light to the abuses of immigration detention despite repression have led the state of Washington to take action.

The lawsuit takes on one of the most consistent demands of people on hunger strike - the abuses of the \$1/day "volunteer" work program. People detained carry out nearly all of the work of the facility, from cleaning to laundry to painting to routine maintenance, including waxing the floors. Hunger strikers have described receiving no training, no protective gear, and to suffering workplace injuries that go untreated. One recent communication from a detained person stated, "We worked until three this morning. We were painting the detention center." Another stated, "This week folks were offered chips or a soup for several nights of waxing the floors, so not even \$1/day."

NWDC Resistance has been documenting the immigrant-led resistance against ICE and GEO Group at the Tacoma facility. An 11-minute documentary on the recent hunger-strikes which led to the filing of the Attorney General's lawsuit was released today. It is available at <https://youtu.be/VGG8b7bB1to>, and features hunger strikers. "The people most affected by the Northwest Detention Center – those detained – have been leading the resistance against it. We are glad to see the Attorney General stepping up to join their fight," said Maru Mora Villalpando of NWDC Resistance. She pointed out that the federal government must be held accountable as well: "The federal government set the \$1/day rate, and ICE continues to round up and cage people at the GEO-run facilities, and ignore GEO's abuses."

To arrange interviews with people detained and formerly detained on the subject of the lawsuit and work program, please contact NWDC Resistance.

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NWDC Resistance is a volunteer community group that emerged to fight deportations in 2014 at the now-infamous Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA. NWDC Resistance supports people detained who organized hunger strikes asking for a halt to all deportations and better treatment and conditions.

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