

# *Protests against increasing COVID-19 cases at immigrant prisons in U.S.*

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Phoenix, April 13 (RHC)-- In the U.S. state of Arizona, over 700 people joined a car rally outside the privately owned Eloy Detention Center and La Palma Correctional Facility near Phoenix, demanding the immediate release of all immigrants in custody as COVID-19 cases continue to rise.

As of last week, there were five confirmed cases in Arizona immigration jails, including two inside La Palma, though activists say the numbers are likely much higher.

Stephanie Figgins Ramirez, an organizer of the rally held in cars surrounding the prison facility, told reporters: "We call on Governor Ducey to publicly pressure ICE to shut down detention centers, to free all migrants and stop removal operations. We also call on Governor Ducey to stop funneling more people into ICE centers by ending sheriff and ICE collaboration in county jails."

In related news, women imprisoned at the Otay Mesa Detention Center near San Diego say CoreCivic — the private company that runs Otay Mesa — sent a shipment of surgical masks to the facility last week, but that prisoners were told they first had to sign a contract protecting CoreCivic from liability if they became sick. When the women refused to sign, ICE guards reportedly pepper-sprayed them. The

contract requirement has since been withdrawn. Activists held a car rally outside Otay Mesa Saturday protesting the attack.

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