

# *Immigrant prisoners in California launch hunger strike and denounce inhumane treatment*

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San Diego, April 21 (RHC)-- Dozens of immigrant prisoners at the privately owned Otay Mesa Detention Center near San Diego in the U.S. state of California have begun a hunger strike over mounting concerns about their safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Otay Mesa now has the largest coronavirus outbreak of any immigration jail in the United States. Last week, reports emerged of Otay Mesa guards pepper-spraying a group of women in one of the holding units for refusing to sign a contract reportedly protecting CoreCivic from liability if immigrants became sick, in exchange for face masks.

In more immigration news, dozens of people held a rally outside a prison for immigrant youth in Chicago demanding they release detained children. The Heartland Alliance facility houses nearly 70 children separated from their parents on the U.S.-Mexico border, and as of last week confirmed some 37 children

have tested positive for COVID-19. In recent days, images have emerged of youth inside displaying signs at the facility's windows that read "HELP."

In other news, calls continue to mount for the release of prisoners in the U.S. as cases explode at jails around the country. In Florida, a protester locked himself to two concrete barrels in front of the mansion of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, protesting the governor's refusal to release incarcerated people during the coronavirus pandemic. In Ohio, over 2,400 prisoners at the Marion Correctional Institution have tested positive for COVID-19.

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