

Let's Shut Down the Northwest Detention Center!

We believe in ending immigration detention. As such, we call for the shutdown of the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) in Tacoma, Washington. Immigration detention has no place in Washington State, or anywhere else. We believe that immigrants belong with their families and communities.

These are some of the organizations that have endorsed the call to shut down the NWDC:

- La Resistencia (formerly NWDC Resistance)
- ACLU-WA
- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why are people detained? Don't we have to detain immigrants?

The federal government has deliberately implemented a steady rise in immigrant detention, largely through the creation of "[mandatory detention](#)" laws. Thirty years ago, ICE did not exist and immigration authorities rarely detained people while processing their deportation cases. The US does not have to detain people. The federal government chooses to allocate money to detain more than 55,000 people per day, a budget that sets into motion the business of caging people for money.

What is the history of the NWDC?

The state of Washington has a long history of violence against immigrants, tracing back to the 1885 [Tacoma Method](#) of burning down the homes of Chinese railroad workers and expelling them from Washington Territory on the railroad. The first major sweep involving immigrant detention was during World War II, when people of Japanese citizenship and descent were sent to concentration camps. When the US government put out a call for an immigrant detention center in Washington in 2000, the daily detained population in the state hovered around 180 people per day. The Seattle detention center was closed down, and the Tacoma Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) was built.

Why shut down rather than trying to fix the NWDC?

Since 2004, the NWDC has created misery and suffering for tens of thousands of immigrants, who have been caged for weeks, months, and sometimes years while awaiting the resolution of their civil deportation proceedings. People detained have repeatedly made their opposition to their incarceration clear through hunger strikes, work stoppages, and other forms of protest. For many populations, including queer and trans people, people living with disabilities and serious illnesses, and people who are pregnant and/or parenting, detention brings extra forms of suffering that cannot be mitigated except by the closure of the facility.

Every time GEO Group and ICE say they are improving the facility, they have just expanded the number of people caged in the state of Washington -- from 500 to 1,575 since the facility opened. What's more, in their budget request to Congress for 2020, ICE proposes to expand detention in our region by more than 50%! In 2019, GEO Group unveiled plans to expand the detention center in violation of Tacoma's municipal code. If we don't shut it down, it will continue growing.

If the NWDC is shut down, won't people be detained in worse places, far from their families and communities?

The NWDC is one in a network of over 200 facilities across the country where migrants are caged. Ending the practice of caging migrants will require concerted action, and this shut-down campaign is part of a [national strategy](#) to challenge the existence and expansion of immigrant detention. Shutting down the NWDC, one of GEO Group's "flagship" facilities, would send a powerful message to the private prison industry and the federal government, and more importantly, to the thousands fighting detention centers across the country and along the border, that ending immigration detention is within our reach. Central to the fight to shut down the NWDC are efforts to free all who are detained there, and to support those who may be transferred elsewhere when the facility closes.

In other places where facilities have shut-down, immigration arrests have decreased because ICE no longer has a local place to detain people. We can already see this happening in the case of Washington and Oregon. These states have similar immigrant populations (OR=10%, WA=14%), but Oregon doesn't have a detention center. Oregon's biggest immigrant detention facility is a county jail, NORCOR, which detains between twenty to thirty people daily through a contract with ICE. According to [TRAC](#), over the past three years there were 5,000 immigration arrests in OR and 12,000 in WA – two and a half times as many. If we dismantle the infrastructure that allows for easy detention of our neighbors and family members, we expect less immigration enforcement in this state.

As long as the NWDC exists, GEO Group will seek to expand it, ICE will seek to fill it, and both asylum-seekers arriving at the border and Washington State residents will be in danger of being caged there. It's time to close this shameful chapter in Washington's history, halt all detention expansion, and shut down the facility.

Want to endorse the call to shut down the NWDC? Go to bit.ly/ShutDownNWDC

Want to get involved? Check out our events listed at <https://www.facebook.com/LaResistenciaNW>

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