



Shut Down Adelanto
Conditions and Updates Report
May 2022

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Acknowledgements

This report was put together by The Shut Down Adelanto Coalition, a coalition of organizations ranging from legal service providers, grassroots organizations, and directly impacted individuals focused on shifting the narrative about detained immigrants, advocating for the safety and release of all immigrants, and advocating for the Just Closure of the Adelanto ICE Processing Center (“Adelanto”) & Desert View Modified Correctional Facility (“Desert View”).

Methodology

This report presents information gathered and obtained from community advocates, legal service providers, government reports, and most importantly, the voices of those currently detained at Adelanto and Desert View. For the purposes of this report, we focused on the testimonies and interviews from six individuals. Their stories can be found in the appendix alongside information about their cases or their interviews. Additionally, many of the sections in this report provide information about the facilities, which was based on the ongoing communication and contact among those detained and the following nonprofits and communication organizations: **Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Freedom for Immigrants, Adelanto Visitation Group, California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance, and the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice.**

I. [Introduction](#)

The United States operates the world's largest immigration detention system with a network of over 200 detention centers across the country. The system, run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has always been cruel, inhumane and deadly as shown by an [extensive and well documented history of abuse and neglect](#). People in detention, their loved ones and communities have been sounding the alarm and organizing to shut down detention centers across the country. Under the Trump administration, the detention system continued to balloon with over 50,000 people detained at its height in the summer of

2019. Fiscal Year 2020 was the [deadliest year](#) for those in ICE detention since 2005, with 21 lives tragically lost. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the United States in 2020, conditions inside ICE detention centers became even more dire. Between May and August of 2020, ICE detention facilities were responsible not only for thousands of COVID cases in detention centers, but [contributed to more than 245,000 additional COVID-19 cases in communities throughout the country](#). Advocates and medical professionals called for the release of all people from detention amid the pandemic. Despite facing retaliation, a growing number of people inside detention centers are bravely speaking out to bring attention to their situation, releasing videos, writing letters, and participating in hunger strikes and labor strikes.

Adelanto has been detaining people since 2011, when the City of Adelanto entered into a contract with ICE and the GEO Group, Inc. (GEO) to detain 975 people. Since then, ICE has [expanded](#) the facility to detain 2,690 people, making Adelanto the largest ICE detention center in the West Coast.

[Advocates](#), the [California Department of Justice](#), and the [Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General](#) have documented the long list of human rights abuses at Adelanto, including inadequate health care, [sexual assault](#), use of solitary confinement, and mistreatment. These abuses are not unique to Adelanto, though between 2010 and 2016, the facility was in the top five facilities with the most complaints to ICE's reporting line for sexual and physical abuse. Alarming, seven immigrants have died at the Adelanto facility since it opened. In 2017, three people died within three months, including [Osmar Epifanio Gonzalez-Gabda](#), [Sergio Alonso Lopez](#), and [Vicente Caceres Madariaga](#). There have been at least [seven attempted suicides](#) at the facility, which underscores the severity of conditions.

Most recently, in a failed attempt to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, Adelanto staff [confirmed using a toxic chemical disinfectant](#) inside the facility, causing people to develop bloody noses, burning eyes, and persistent cough.

II. [Updates on COVID-19 Prevention and Care](#)

Since the beginning of the pandemic, ICE has been a black hole of information with regards to COVID-19 preventative measures, testing, and care. At the height of the pandemic, staff at Adelanto were using a toxic disinfectant that was causing headaches; were actively withholding hand sanitizer and masks; and were not promoting social distancing measures to help prevent spread of COVID-19. Advocates and lawyers have only been able to obtain information into these abuses through litigation and the testimonies from those inside. While the [Hernandez Roman v. Wolf](#) case created access to accurate and timely data with regards to population numbers and infection, that information is not available to the general public.

Publicly reported data by ICE continues to be largely unreliable, and thus, the information presented here is a combination of information obtained from litigation, public databases, and analyses of partner organizations like the Vera Institute of Justice¹. The unreliability of ICE's information shows the pressing need for further oversight into how ICE reports information, especially as it relates to Desert View, the newest detention facility in the City of Adelanto.

According to the ICE COVID-19 portal, the total number of reported cases since the beginning of the pandemic [for Adelanto is 272 positive cases and zero deaths, while Desert View has a total of 90 positive cases and zero deaths](#). As mentioned above, thanks to the *Hernandez Roman* case, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California and co-counsel receive daily information about population numbers and testing at Adelanto. It is likely that the reported number of 272 cases is much lower than what detained individuals and community organizations reported, especially given that it took Adelanto months before they administered appropriate testing at the facility. Ultimately, it is unknown how many individuals & employees inside Adelanto ended up catching COVID-19, but let's not forget that [Adelanto and other detention centers across the US also caused a spike in COVID-19 cases in their surrounding communities due to the lack of protections](#).

Currently, as of April 13, 2022, the population at Adelanto is at 26 people, all of whom have tested negative for COVID-19. Unfortunately, the litigation does not cover Desert View, so we can not say for sure the exact number of individuals detained there. However, according to ICE Public Databases, there were 98 individuals there as of March 13th. Legal service providers, advocates, and those inside the facility report the number to be somewhere closer to 200 as of this month.

III. [Overview of Abuses and Violations](#)

Environmental Issues at the Facility

At the height of the pandemic, GEO Group's failed attempt to mitigate the covid outbreaks led to the abuse of the toxic pesticide HDQ Neutral inside of Adelanto. Our advocacy led to congressional inquiry and an [investigation and report by the US Environmental Protection Agency](#), which confirmed the powerful testimonies of immigrants detained. Shortly after this terrible incident, [immigrants detained reported water contamination](#) that resulted in several immigrants suffering from *h pylori*, a waterborne disease.

The water contamination at Adelanto is not a new issue, and we continue to receive complaints from inside of the facility. However, any attempts of investigation and intervention have been struck down. According to extensive research, carceral facilities like Adelanto underscore serious environmental deficiencies and injustices, particularly on the problem of water contamination.²

¹Vera's Open Face Portal allows you to navigate per facility the number of cases per month and trends. We have also included some useful trends in the appendix to see the increase of cases through time.

² Baker, Elijah & Wilson, Cambria & Lake, Fabiana & Pellow, David, *Environmental Justice Struggles in Prisons and Jails around the World: The 2020 Annual Report of the Prison Environmental Justice Project*, (December 2020), available at



“The drinking water they provide us inside the facility is contaminated. They never clean the jugs where they store the water. I feel sick each time I consume large amounts. Symptoms I experience are severe stomach aches and inflammation.”
- Pastor Hugo Gomez ³

Limited Visitation Access and the Effects of Prolonged Isolation

Separation and isolation from one’s loved ones are one of the greatest mental stressors that people in immigration detention face. Most people detained express missing their spouses, partners, and children. Since the beginning of the pandemic, visitation has been suspended and in-person visits have not resumed, even though all other places in our communities have made accommodations and reopened to the public.

When asked about other stressors, individuals raised several other factors such as lack of reading materials or music, inability to bathe regularly, abrupt searches and lock-downs, tampering with mail, facility room temperatures that are too cold or too hot, and solitary confinement - which for some has lasted over two years.

One person detained in Adelanto, [Mario](#), was held for almost three-and-a-half years, and two of those he was completely isolated from anyone outside due to the suspension of visitors during the pandemic. When people got sick of COVID-19, the Adelanto facility was not ready at all. Mario experienced firsthand the negligence of GEO and ICE during the COVID-19 outbreak. When Mario became ill with the virus, he was placed in a cold room for 23.5 hours, without any basic medicine for fever and body aches associated with COVID-19 symptoms.

<https://gejp.es.ucsb.edu/sites/default/files/sitefiles/publication/Prison%20EJ%20Project%202020%20Report-compressed.pdf>.

³ See Appendix E for Pastor Hugo’s information.



“I got placed with others who were sick in the same dorm. They kept the room temperature cold. No blankets were given to us. Nor did we receive any medication, no attention, and the message was, “We don't care about any of you.” And they showed no remorse. Not seeing my parents for 2 years was very hard for me.”

- Mario⁴

Some of the most common physiological stressors of detention include headaches or migraines, and fatigue from ongoing physical and mental exhaustion. Extreme weight loss or gain is also common, which can be due to the lack of nutritious, appetizing, and plentiful food, and lack of opportunities for exercise. People in stressful situations also often employ behaviors such as emotional eating or self-starvation - including for political ends, such as hunger strikes. Given the well-documented medical neglect in detention⁵, rapid and extreme weight loss or gain can be especially dangerous. As a result, individuals often experience serious consequences such as fainting or heart attacks.

“We are depressed, sad and hurting - emotionally and mentally - since we are the only 3 females remaining in ICE detention. We are dying to be reunited with our families.”

- Ligaya⁶

At least one asylum-seeking individual despaired to the point of attempting suicide in 2021. In retaliation, GEO staff threw him into solitary confinement with no clothing, mattress, blanket, or toilet. While he fortunately survived, he subsequently feared being honest with medical staff and avoided requesting any mental health treatment, with the fears that he would be once again put into solitary confinement and unable to use the tablets to stay in communication with his family.

Issues with Food and Access to Commissary

⁴ See Appendix C for Mario's information.

⁵ See section I., Introduction, where reports are hyperlinked.

⁶ See Appendix D for Ligaya's testimony and information.

Access to healthy food and the conditions of confinement have been an ongoing issue at Adelanto for many years. The reports from individuals on the inside detail the rotten, unhealthy food that is served to people detained. People detained at Adelanto have described being served bones in bologna sandwiches, spoiled lettuce, ground-up paper in meat, and overcooked vegetables that instantly turn to mush in their mouths.

“The quality of the food is very poor... Our hairs are falling off, our skins are dry and our teeth are falling out from suffering malnutrition... I am losing appetite, losing sleep, losing weight, and I am certainly losing my health and my life.”

- Ligaya

Starting in December 2021, Adelanto instituted a 30 percent commissary fee increase implemented in January 2022, a move that was accompanied by the termination of the inmate work program. The program allowed people detained an opportunity to earn one dollar a day for their labor, which, over time, would help some individuals purchase food or products not offered at the facility. With the news of the 30 percent commissary increase, this mere dollar came in handy for many individuals who were already struggling to make ends meet on the inside:

“The price for things has gone up - I think like 23% - 30% but there is a sign that states that things are more expensive. The sign says that items will be subject to a 20 to 30 percent increase but it's been about 8 months since I didn't buy commissary. 8-9 months that I don't buy anything. For example a Cup of Noodles used to be at 1.65 and it went up to 1.78 that the extent of the increase”

- Felipe⁷

“Las cosas han subido, Yo creo un 23 % -30%, Pero hay un letrero que dice que las cosas subieron. Hay un letrero que dice que las cosas van a ser sujetas a subir un 20 a 30 %, pero ya tiene ocho meses que yo no compro la comisaría. 8-9 meses que yo no compro nada. Por ejemplo la Macareno (Cup of Noodles) estaba a 1.65 y subió a 1.78 ese es el precio que subió.”

- Felipe

In addition, the families of individuals detained noted that the fees to deposit money in an individual's commissary account, increased from \$6.95 to \$7.95, a 15 percent increase for families who live from paycheck to paycheck (an increase directly correlates to the amount of funds they can deposit their love ones). This means that if someone deposits \$50.00 to a

⁷ See Appendix E for Felipe's testimony and information.

family member in detention, after the fees, the person in detention only has \$42.05 available.

Access to Resources and Legal Representation

Access to Resources

Eight-four percent of people in ICE detention receive no legal representation.⁸ Whereas unrepresented immigrants in the community can access a wide range of self-help resources through local nonprofits and other organizations, those in detention are left to navigate the “labyrinth” of immigration law, “second only to the Internal Revenue Code in complexity,” on their own.⁹

The only free resource for immigrants in detention is the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) managed by the immigration court system. LOP providers can offer information and help fill out forms, but their services are limited – even more so during the pandemic, when all communication is over the phone. Immigrants who speak languages other than English and Spanish must use an interpreter via a three-way phone call to communicate with the LOP team – if one is even available, which is not always the case for those who speak indigenous or African languages.

People in ICE detention do not have access to the Internet and cannot conduct research on their own. In theory, Adelanto has a law library. However, the computers there are often down, printing and photocopying services are minimal, and the information is not available in all languages represented among the detained population.

“The computer is completely useless. It has 11 non-working keys (5, 6, delete, q, t, y, g, h, v, b, enter/return). It was brought to their attention over 2.5 months ago... we believe they are trying to save money and do not care about our immigration cases.”

- Ligaya

Only 14 percent of detained immigrants are able to retain counsel, as compared to 37 percent of non-detained immigrants, due in part to the devastating financial impact detention has on families where the detained person was a key wage-earner. The vast majority of detained immigrants rely on the equivalent of a helpdesk to protect them from deportation.¹⁰

Access to Legal Representation

Those who can afford representation fare only slightly better, as the conditions at Adelanto prevent attorneys from providing adequate services. Time constraints and the atmosphere of surveillance make it impossible for even the most dedicated attorneys to discharge their duties.

⁸ <https://www.vera.org/projects/legal-orientation-program>

⁹ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/two-systems-justice-how-immigration-system-falls-short-american-ideals-justice>

¹⁰ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/access-counsel-immigration-court>

The Adelanto immigration court moves much faster than courts outside the detention center, and cases can take years to resolve. However, the benefits of a speedy resolution are offset by unreasonable deadlines for attorneys, which in turn make it more likely that clients will need to appeal, meaning they will still end up spending years in detention – after their cases are decided.

Immigration judges sometimes give attorneys as little as one month to prepare a client's case from start to finish, which involves not only testimony practice but also developing legal strategy, gathering evidence, writing briefs and motions, contacting witnesses, and obtaining records. The vast majority of attorneys have multiple active cases and struggle to produce high quality work under extreme time pressure.

The attorney-client relationship is so critical in immigration law, where clients are often asked to relive their worst moments and greatest fears. Development of the attorney-client relationship requires not only time, but also trust. For non-detained immigrants, this trust is built up over months and sometimes years of meetings at the attorney's office or other locations where privacy is a given. Clients can bring their family members for support, and can return home when the meeting is over. At Adelanto, attorney visits are conducted under the watchful eye of GEO guards.

Prior to the pandemic, attorney visits were conducted in small, cramped rooms with glass windows through which guards could easily observe interactions and although attorney visits are required to be confidential, the rooms are not soundproof. Now, even worse, these meetings take place through prison glass in an open visitation area, which protects against COVID-19 transmission between the attorney and client, but increases the risk of surveillance by guards. GEO guards can easily overhear both sides of the conversation and are now entrusted with passing confidential documents between attorney and client, because there is no way for the attorney and client to share documents directly with each other as they would in a private room.

ICE also routinely obstructs detained individuals from communicating with their attorneys by phone. Confidential legal calls must be scheduled in advance through an attorney appointment line that is not always monitored, and calls that detained individuals can make from within the housing units are not confidential. ICE also opens all mail and restricts the type of documents that can be sent to and from people in detention.¹¹

Ongoing Litigation

Fraihat v. ICE

[*Fraihat v. ICE*](#) is a nationwide class action lawsuit filed in August 2019 in response to the federal government's failure to ensure that detained immigrants with disabilities receive appropriate medical and mental health care. The lawsuit also addressed ICE's punitive use of segregation in violation of the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as its failure to provide accommodations for disabled immigrants or to protect them from discrimination as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

¹¹ For more information about a recent lawsuit regarding attorney access at Adelanto, see: <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/cases/torres-v-dhs>

The *Fraihat* plaintiffs demanded federal court intervention and monitoring throughout the ICE detention network, citing dozens of unnecessary deaths and inhumane treatment – even prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The plaintiffs asked the federal court to order ICE and DHS to improve conditions for people with serious mental and/or physical health problems and to ensure that they did not face discrimination.

In April 2020, in light of the pandemic, the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California [ordered](#) ICE to review the medical records of detained persons and release those who did not pose a flight risk or a danger to society. ICE initially interpreted these guidelines as permission to continue to detain anyone with a criminal record regardless of medical vulnerability, resulting in the death of [at least one individual](#) at Adelanto.

ICE appealed the Court’s decision in December 2020, arguing, in spite of ample evidence to the contrary, that they had not shown “deliberate indifference” to people with medical needs or health risks related to the pandemic.¹² The Ninth Circuit agreed with ICE and remanded the case back to the lower court, where it remains.

Requests for release under *Fraihat* are still being processed until June 13. ICE has released all but 26 people from Adelanto, which is a welcome development. Nonetheless, those still in detention remain vulnerable, not only to COVID-19 but also to general medical neglect. The basis for the [initial complaint](#) – mistreatment of detained people with disabilities – has not changed.

Fraihat was filed pre-pandemic on behalf of plaintiffs with a range of serious medical and mental health conditions, including two individuals with diabetes who were denied insulin, a man with a torn rotator cuff who needed surgery that ICE failed to provide, an individual with a brain parasite who did not receive treatment for over a year, and several people with severe mental illnesses like bipolar disorder and schizophrenia who were subjected to arbitrary and unnecessary segregation.

Mental health problems are common in Adelanto given the high percentage of trauma survivors among detained immigrants. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other disorders are exacerbated by the prison-like conditions and the constant fear of deportation. [Investigations have revealed](#) that ICE not only fails to provide therapy for those in crisis but punishes them with pepper spray, segregation, and other measures. COVID-19 has exacerbated the suffering of detained individuals with mental illness, but ICE’s inhumane treatment of this population predates the pandemic and will certainly continue beyond the lifting of restrictions.

Hernandez Roman v. Wolf

The [Hernandez Roman litigation](#) is an Adelanto-specific class action lawsuit filed by the ACLU Foundation of Southern California in response to ICE’s failure to protect detained people from COVID-19. The plaintiffs successfully argued that the conditions in Adelanto were inhumane and violated their Fifth Amendment rights.

¹²<https://www.courthousenews.com/feds-appeal-court-order-requiring-them-to-care-for-disabled-immigrants-amid-pandemic/>

In April 2020, a judge granted the request for a preliminary injunction and [ruled](#) that Adelanto could not accept any new admissions. He also ordered ICE to implement protections for those still detained and to reduce the population to such a level that would allow for social distancing. (These requirements did not apply to Desert View, which continues to detain between 150 and 200 people).

When ICE failed to make sufficient changes by October of that year, the judge [ordered](#) ICE to release at least 50 people per day until the detained population, then 772, was reduced to 475. The ruling also chastised ICE for “straight up lying” and ordered the facility to begin providing a daily housing and COVID-19 status report.

ICE released the required number but maintained the inhumane conditions for those still in custody. These abuses included the use of the toxic chemical HDQ Neutral, as described above, as well as arbitrary and prolonged lockdowns during which people were confined to their cells for 23 hours a day, giving them only one hour to shower, exercise, and call their families or attorneys.

These measures were not only cruel but ineffective. People continued to contract the virus, including [Martin Vargas Arellano](#), whose death in March 2021 may have been due to complications from COVID-19. ICE’s attempted cover-up of Martin’s death led to a [court order](#) that increased reporting requirements. The order did not, however, include any additional protections for those still detained at Adelanto.

The *Hernandez Roman* litigation is currently in settlement negotiations.

Hernandez v. Garland

[Hernandez v. Garland](#) is a class action lawsuit challenging the government’s practice of setting exorbitant bonds for detained people in immigration proceedings without regard to ability to pay. Immigration judges have wide latitude in bond proceedings, including in the decision to grant or deny bond as well as in the dollar amount. Judges have been known to set bonds in the tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, which is tantamount to a denial for many people – particularly those whose families are already under financial strain due to the loss of the detained person’s income.

A [settlement](#) was reached in March 2022 that will require the government to inquire about the applicant’s financial circumstances. It does not, however, require that the government set a bond at a level the family can afford. Judges will also continue to have almost unlimited discretion in whether to grant bond at all. Many judges make decisions in bond hearings based entirely on a person’s criminal record and refuse to consider evidence of rehabilitation or changed circumstances, which means that many people will remain behind bars until they either win their cases or are deported (a period of years for cases on appeal).

IV. [Call to Action](#)

We demand the immediate closure of Adelanto, as a first step towards the abolition of the inherently cruel and unjust immigration detention system. The Adelanto ICE Processing Center exemplifies the egregiously poor conditions and culture of violence that plague the entirety of ICE detention resulting in system-wide abuses, including death. ICE has been jailing immigrants at Adelanto for ten years now. During that time, ICE and the GEO Group have capitalized on the city's economic instability to expand the hazardous detention center to one of the largest in the country. However, ICE's immigration detention system does not need to exist, and communities across the country are organizing to end it and build a better future.

Below are some actions Members of Congress can take:

- 1) Send letter to DHS Secretary Mayorkas and the Biden Administration sharing this report and urging them to end the Adelanto & Desert View Annex contract.
- 2) Commit to advocate and vote to defund ICE and CBP for fiscal year 2023.
- 3) Commit to work with the ShutDown Adelanto Coalition to routinely inspect and tour both Adelanto and the Desert View Annex.
- 4) Commit to work with the Shut Down Adelanto Coalition to give follow up to the US Environmental Protection Agency 2021 violation issued to GEO Group Inc. and to flag potential additional issues for the agency to investigate.
- 5) Advocate with DHS and ICE to reinstate in-person visitation at Adelanto and the Desert View Annex.

The Shut Down Adelanto Coalition

The Shut Down Adelanto Coalition consists of Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice, Detention Watch Network, Freedom for Immigrants, Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective, Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Nikkei Progressives and Earthjustice, among others.

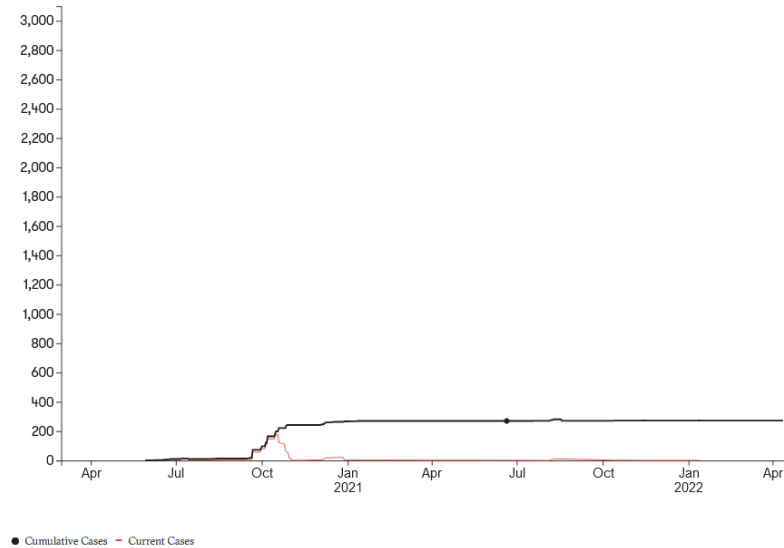
Special thanks to the following individuals who supported the writing of this report: Hilda with Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Margaret Hellerstein with the Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, Kelly Louise Anderson, Esq., Rebecca Merton with Freedom for Immigrants, Humberto Hernandez with California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance, Lizbeth Abeln with Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Marcela Hernandez with Detention Watch Network, Luis Nolasco with ACLU SoCal, Mariela Jaquez with CHIRLA.



A) Adelanto COVID Trends ¹³

ADELANTO ICE PROCESSING CENTER

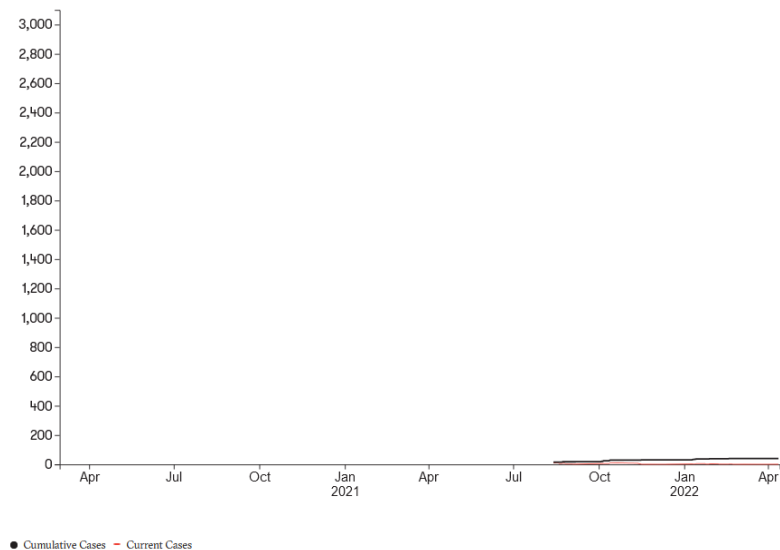
Since its first confirmed case on May 29, 2020, 272 people detained at ADELANTO ICE PROCESSING CENTER have tested positive for COVID-19. ICE reports that 1 person is "currently under observation or monitoring" as of April 12, 2022.



B) Desert View COVID Trends

DESERT VIEW ANNEX

Since its first confirmed case on August 13, 2021, 40 people detained at DESERT VIEW ANNEX have tested positive for COVID-19. ICE reports that 1 person is "currently under observation or monitoring" as of April 12, 2022.



C) Mario (recently released)

a) [#FreeMario Toolkit](#)

¹³ Obtained from VERA Institute of Justice's analysis:
<https://www.vera.org/tracking-covid-19-in-immigration-detention>

D) Ligaya (currently in detention)

- a) [November 2021 CRCL complaint](#)
- b) [December 2021 letter](#)
- c) [February 2022 letter](#)

E) Felipe (recently released)

- a) [Transcription of Call with Felipe in February 2022.](#)
- b) Audio Testimony of Felipe [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)

F) Pastor Hugo

- a) [#FreePastorHugo](#) Toolkit

G) Additional stories

- a) All audio testimony including additional people not mentioned above can be found in this [folder](#).