

Hunger strike at Michigan immigrant detention center

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Detainees at ICE's massive North Lake Processing Center in Baldwin, Michigan, staged a hunger strike beginning April 20, 2026. In a press release shared by No Detention Centers in Michigan (NDCM), the hunger strike was held by male detainees who cited "dangerous conditions, a lack of adequate food and medical care, and cruel legal obstacles that have kept many in captivity with no end in sight." Detainees are also reportedly striking from their jobs within the detention center itself, including laundry, cleaning and kitchen duties. The 1,800-bed facility is the largest ICE detention center in the Midwest and currently holds approximately 1,400 detainees.

The WSWS reached out to NDCM, which maintains communication with the North Lake detainees, for a comment on the strike, which a spokesperson described as "a collective response both to the appalling conditions that people have faced at North Lake now and in the past—inadequate food, medical neglect, denial of basic resources—and to the cruel policies from ICE and immigration judges that have kept many behind bars for far too long. Some people detained at North Lake have won their habeas corpus suits, only to be denied bond. Some have asked to be deported, only to be stuck in limbo in this rural Michigan prison for months."

NDCM reported to the WSWS that, as of April 21, a majority of men in multiple units were participating in the strike, meaning hundreds of detainees. As of April 22, one unit called off the strike after North Lake personnel told them they had no other options but to request voluntary departure or deportation, and otherwise attempted to identify the strike leaders. Detainees in other units are reportedly continuing the hunger strike. NDCM has stated that GEO Group, which operates North Lake, has punitively cancelled

recreation time in response to the strike, an unsurprising move given the history of abuse and neglect at the facility.

NDCM also informed WSWS of the demands of the strikers which were communicated through an attorney and are re-published here verbatim:

1. ICE officials come and talk to them to explain why they are being unjustly held.

2. ICE review each detainee's circumstances and liberate people. ICE can grant parole as they did in the past. The detainees should not have to rely on immigration judges who are not neutral.

3. ICE should make decisions more quickly. Waiting 120 days for ICE to decide what to do is too long and inhumane.

4. Food. There are people who are hungry and GEO employees throw food away. The food is not enough to sustain them. They are only given protein once a week. There are people having allergic reactions.

5. Laundry. They are receiving clothes that make them itchy and having allergic reactions. They don't know what chemicals they are using to clean the inmates clothes.

6. Arbitrary rules must stop. They recently implemented a new 6 a.m. headcount without any notice. They make rules arbitrarily.

7. Regular sleep. They are kept awake all night. The guards keep their radios loud, and there is noise all night that does not allow them to sleep.

NDCM has stated that the strike will continue until all of the demands are addressed, and more detainees are expected to join.

The strikers' demands and grievances are fully consistent with ICE and GEO Group's documented record of abuses, including a network of secret detention centers. In particular, North Lake has gained

notoriety for its record of illegal detentions and medical neglect since it was reopened in mid-2025. ICE reports that the average stay at North Lake is 49 days. However, many detainees have been incarcerated there for over six months.

This hunger strike does not occur in isolation. Similar protests have been reported at ICE facilities at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana; Otay Mesa Detention Center in San Diego, California; and the South Florida Detention Facility, so-called “Alligator Alcatraz,” in Ochopee, Florida. In 2019, hunger-striking detainees at an ICE facility in Texas were subjected to force-feeding through nasal tubes, a form of torture used at Guantanamo Bay and other CIA-run black sites.

Ahman Alnajdawi, a Jordanian immigrant, participated in the hunger strike along with 300 other detainees in his unit. He has stated that he is not seeking to be released on bond nor is he seeking asylum in the United States. He simply wants to return to his home country and rejoin his pregnant wife. Nevertheless, his deportation from the United States has been unreasonably delayed.

An unnamed detainee stated: “We demand competent doctors, better medical care. The food here is absolute garbage. And, above all, an end to the procedural delays we are suffering through inside these walls.”

Diana Martin, an attorney representing two North Lake detainees, stated that the strike is “the result of the inhumane conditions that folks are being exposed to and the prolonged detention that so many individuals at North Lake have had to endure.”

Michigan Advance requested a comment from a GEO Group spokesperson, but the hunger strike was not addressed. Instead, the spokesperson offered only a bland recitation of an obvious company line: that detainees are supposedly provided “around-the-clock access to medical care, in-person and virtual legal and family visitation, general and legal library access, translation services, dietician-approved meals, religious and specialty diets, recreational amenities, and opportunities to practice their religious beliefs... [a]dditionally, all of GEO’s ICE Processing Centers are independently accredited by the American Correctional Association and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.” To date, ICE itself has not issued a public comment on the strike.

On April 21, several dozen protesters gathered outside North Lake to support the detainees on hunger strike. Several of these protesters attempted to block vehicles from exiting the facility.

In the face of this hunger strike, the only morally and politically consistent response is mass working class solidarity. The struggle to end ICE’s grotesque abuses of immigrants cannot be trusted to either capitalist party, both of which are complicit in these abuses. Nor can GEO Group, which profits from this system, be expected to reform its own practices.

This strike must be supported by coordinated action by the working class with the formation of rank-and-file committees and workplace stoppages that disrupt logistics and supply chains which sustain these detention centers.



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