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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Federal Court Slams For-Profit Immigration Detention Center for Solitary Confinement Policies

Coalition issues public letter warning ICE that the private prison corporation is in violation of their contract

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA -- Late last week, the United States District Court of the Southern District of California allowed claims to proceed that Management & Training Corporation (MTC) - owner and operator of Imperial Regional Detention Facility (IRDF) - engaged in “outrageous conduct” and acted with “reckless disregard” by subjecting Plaintiff Carlos Murillo Vega to over a year of solitary confinement when he was detained there. The Court also held that Mr. Murillo had presented “substantial” evidence that MTC’s use of solitary confinement for people in protective custody violated ICE standards. The Court squarely denied MTC’s motion for summary judgment, granting Mr. Carlos Murillo Vega his day in court and allowing him to seek punitive damages. Mr. Murillo was detained in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody where he was held in solitary confinement for 14 months, a practice that amounts to torture.

MTC subjects everyone in protective custody at IRDF to administrative segregation, which amounts to solitary confinement. In denying MTC’s motion for summary judgment, the Court rejected MTC’s arguments that ICE policy permitted the blanket use of segregation for Mr. Murillo and opined that reasonable jurors could find MTC’s practices inflicted emotional harm to Mr. Murillo.

“The evidence in this case shows that MTC has been unlawfully subjecting people to solitary confinement at IRDF with impunity, in violation of the law and its contract with ICE, for years,” said Lee Ann Felder-Heim of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. “It is time for ICE to stop sponsoring this abuse and end its contract with MTC.”

“I’m encouraged that MTC was not able to skirt justice for their intentional and reckless human rights abuses,” said Jimi Degan, a UCLA Law Human Rights Litigation Clinic student who researched the legal issues the court decided in the order. “Mr. Murillo deserves reparations for the abuses he suffered.”

“We are pleased with the Court’s decision and hope to obtain accountability at trial. Solitary confinement, especially for such a prolonged period, is a form of torture,” said Mr. Murillo’s counsel Ellen V. Leonida of BraunHagey & Borden, LLP.

“The court’s decision puts us one step closer to justice for Mr. Murillo,” said Lisa Knox, legal director of the California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice. “Now, we urge ICE to take action and end MTC’s contract so no one else is subjected to the torture Mr. Murillo endured.”

MTC's inhumane treatment of Mr. Murillo violated numerous standards of care that MTC is contractually obligated to comply with, according to their agreement with ICE. Starting December 13, 2019, Mr. Murillo was caged in solitary confinement at IRDF for 22 hours a day, for 14 months. Mr. Murillo's cell was so small that he was able to touch both walls when stretching out his arms. Even when he was allowed to leave his cell, he was often alone and forced to exercise in a small, fenced-in cage. These conditions had a devastating impact on Mr. Murillo's physical and mental health.

Despite its awareness of the harms of long-term solitary confinement and its noncompliance with ICE's contract requirements, MTC subjected Mr. Murillo to solitary confinement for 14 months without *once* identifying a threat to his safety in the general population dorms in clear violation of industry standards.

Today, a coalition of legal organizations and human rights groups published a [letter to ICE](#) highlighting that Mr. Murillo's treatment at MTC's IRDF is not an isolated incident. The letter asserts that MTC routinely fails to comply with standards of care and that ICE has failed to address these violations, allowing MTC to torture detainees with impunity.

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A copy of the federal court's judgment and other case documents can be found [here](#).

The Accountability In Detention Act empowers individuals to sue private detention facilities for refusing to comply with standards of care incorporated into their contracts that are meant to protect the wellbeing and safety of those detained under them.

Mr. Murillo is represented by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area, BraunHagey & Borden LLP, the UCLA School of Law Promise Institute's Human Rights Litigation Clinic & California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice