

# END DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

STATE: California

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3

FACILITIES: Yuba County Jail

CAPACITY: 221 (approx.)

## Yuba County Jail

### Facility and Contract Overview

The Yuba County Jail (YCJ) [operates](#) under an Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) between the Yuba County Sheriff's Office and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The contract began in 2004. In 2008, Yuba County updated the IGSA [agreement](#). According to a [report](#) on detention in California by the state's Attorney General (AG), the facility is currently operating under an extension through December 2099. According to the same report, the facility's per diem rate is \$97.39. The facility cages people in both men and women assigned units and has capacity for 220 people. Per the 2008 IGSA agreement, YCJ is contractually obligated to abide by ICE's 2000 National Detention Standards. However, these standards were [superseded](#) in December 2019 by the 2019 National Detention Standards for Non-Dedicated Facilities.

### Documented Abuses

According to the Sacramento Bee, in 2016 five individuals [sued](#) the facility, alleging instances of excessive use of force, medical and mental health neglect, excessive use of solitary confinement, and numerous constitutional rights violations. In January 2019, Yuba County and the plaintiffs reached a [settlement](#) requiring YCJ to improve conditions and disability access, improve its medical and mental health care service, and to provide more access to out-of-cell time for all detained individuals, particularly for those in solitary confinement.

Per the previously referenced report by California's AG, in 2017 the California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG), which is contracted to provide 24/7 medical services to the facility, was awarded \$20 million to be used in facility expansion and extensive renovations, as well as improvement of medical facilities and programs to better treat the people detained at YCJ. In July 2019, the Sacramento Bee [reported](#) that the renovations and construction had still not yet begun.

In March 2017, ICE's Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) conducted an [inspection](#) of the facility as a follow up review of a 2014 ICE Office of Detention Overview (ODO) inspection. The 2014 ODO [inspection](#) had found 14 deficiencies in 7 standards, including compliance with policies on sexual assault and abuse prevention and inappropriate use of solitary confinement. The 2017 ERO inspection found an additional 17 deficiencies in 10 standards, including in the areas of food services and health services, and repeated violations in standards relating to sexual abuse prevention and use of force.



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

### Key Areas of Concern

- Medical neglect
- Insufficient suicide prevention policies
- Retaliation against hunger strikers

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The Northern California news source KQED [reported](#) on additional instances of neglect and medical discrimination at YCJ in 2017. The report cited the case of “Rafael,” a 27 year-old man who suffered from HIV and Hepatitis C. While detained at YCJ, Rafael was given antacids instead of proper treatment for his condition and had to request multiple blood tests through his attorney. In the same 2017 press report, KQED reported that Orsay Alegria-Simuta, a man of Mexican origin, experienced physical abuse and medical neglect while detained at YCJ. Mr. Alegria-Simuta alleged that he was beaten by a guard while having an epileptic seizure, and was denied his medication and placed in isolation for three days. He reported permanent damage to his right hand as a result of the physical abuse he endured by YCJ staff.

In the 2017 report, KQED points out that YCJ has demonstrated that they are not adequately prepared to respond to suicide attempts or medical emergencies. An attorney interviewed by KQED reported that in 2014, people detained at YCJ had to revive a man who attempted suicide at the facility because facility staff did not have the proper equipment to facilitate cardiopulmonary resuscitation. According to the same KQED report, people facing mental health crises are sometimes put in isolation at YCJ, potentially discouraging individuals having suicidal thoughts from reporting them and seeking proper care. Per a CBS Sacramento report, as of 2016 there had been 41 [reported](#) suicide attempts at YCJ.

Advocates with Faithful Friends report that between August 2018 and July 2019, there were at least three group hunger strikes at YCJ. According to [reports](#) by the Sacramento Bee, hunger strikers have protested substandard medical care and filthy facility conditions, such as cockroach infestations, nonfunctional plumbing (resulting in sewage overflows), and widespread mold that is simply painted over by YCJ. Per the Sacramento Bee report, hunger strikers are often transferred to the oldest and most unsanitary area of the facility, known as the “dungeon,” in retaliation.

In 2019, an individual who had been detained at YCJ was included in a class action [lawsuit](#) by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) regarding people with serious and chronic conditions being denied prompt and adequate care. Per the suit, staff at YCJ should have referred a detained man named Marco Montoya Amaya to a neurologist for treatment for apparent end-stage neurocysticercosis. His symptoms worsened over his time in detention, indicating a potentially life-threatening brain parasite condition.

## Resources

- [Faithful Friends - Amigos Fieles](#)
- [NorCal Resist](#)
- [Detention Digest](#)
- [Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform](#)
- [Sacramento Immigration Coalition](#)
- [Tsuru for Solidarity](#)
- [California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice](#)
- [San Francisco Public Defender Immigration Unit](#)
- [Centro Legal de La Raza](#)
- [Pangea Legal Services](#)
- [Dolores Street Community Services](#)
- [CARECEN SF Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto](#)
- [Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay](#)
- [Bay Area Immigration Bond Fund](#)

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Yet, at the time of the suit and over a year after Montoya Amaya should have been referred, he had still not seen a neurologist. YCJ failed to provide his full medical records upon Montoya Amaya's subsequent transfer to Mesa Verde Detention Facility in California. A 2019 Shadow Proof [report](#) also detailed that Montoya Amaya was placed in segregation for eating an extra tray of food.

## COVID-19 Related Abuses and Neglect

People inside of detention and advocates report that the already substandard conditions and ongoing abuse at YCJ worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2020, a woman previously detained at YCJ [told](#) the Desert Sun that detained people faced delayed medical care; social distancing wasn't possible at the facility; guards were not using masks; and they didn't have access to cleaning supplies or disinfectant. In April 2020, an attorney reported to FFI that people detained at YCJ were only receiving one small hotel-size bar of soap per week to be used both for washing hands and for showering. Also in April, an individual in YCJ reported to an outside advocate that facility staff was spraying bleach around housing units, including directly into his eyes. As a result, the man suffered from inflammation and blurry vision. Per the report, he was told to wash his eyes with water after multiple requests to obtain medical attention.

In March 2020, 13 detained people in Mesa Verde Detention Center and YCJ [sued](#) ICE seeking release due to being vulnerable to developing life threatening conditions if they get sick with COVID-19. In June 2020, the [9th Circuit Judge Chabria](#) found that ICE's actions at Mesa Verde and YCJ "since the pandemic began have shown beyond doubt that ICE cannot currently be trusted to prevent constitutional violations at these particular facilities without judicial intervention."

People in YCJ have led several hunger and labor strikes as a response to substandard care and unsanitary conditions, demanding the release of everyone from the facility. In August 2020, Joe Mejia, an asylum seeker formerly detained at YCJ and who had led hunger strikes while at the facility, [told](#) Democracy Now that hunger strikers were pepper sprayed, handcuffed and isolated in retaliation for organizing. Mejia also described YCJ's practice of penalizing detained people if they hand washed the single mask they were given. In July 2020, detained immigrants organized a hunger strike [demanding](#) state elected officials Governor Gavin Newsom and Attorney General Xavier Becerra to stop transfers, halt expansion and inspect ICE facilities. Additionally, hunger strikers demanded that the Yuba County's Sheriff's immediately addressed substandard conditions, provided personal protective equipment and paid fair wages.