

DETENTION IN YOUR DISTRICT

STATE: Mississippi

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 3

FACILITIES: Adams County Correctional Center

CAPACITY: 2,567 (approx.)

Facility & Contract Overview

Adams County Correctional Center (Adams) is located in Natchez, Mississippi. According to a December 2016 audit by the U.S. Department of Justice Office (DoJ) Office of the Inspector General (OIG), the facility opened in [2009](#) after the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BoP) awarded a contract to CoreCivic (then known as the Corrections Corporation of America) to house up to 2,567 low-security, non-U.S. citizen men serving criminal sentences. According to the audit, the initial contract had a four-year base period beginning on August 1, 2009 with the possibility of three two-year extensions. In [May of 2019](#), the BOP announced that it would not renew its contract with CoreCivic for Adams. In [July 2019](#), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Spokesperson Bryan Cox stated that ICE had begun detaining immigrants at Adams in June 2019. According to a [September 2019](#) press report, a new contract between CoreCivic, ICE, and Natchez County will add 50 new jobs to the facility as well as 25-30 local ICE positions. In addition, CoreCivic will pay Natchez County 50 cents per detained individual per day - generating approximately \$400,000 in annual revenue for the county annually. In [July 2019](#), Senator Elizabeth Warren sent an open letter to ICE leadership expressing concern with the fact that ICE did not publicly disclose its use of the Adams facility. As of December 2019, the facility is not listed in ICE's facility locator and the facility's contract is not publicly available.

History of Abuse

Government investigators and advocates have documented a long history of abuse at the Adams facility. According to [February 2016](#) report by The Nation, medical neglect led to the deaths of at least three people detained at Adams. In January 2011, 34-year-old Lucio Gonzalez Perez died of AIDS-related illness after facility staff failed to initially screen him for HIV and then delayed treatment. In April 2011, 60 year-old Hilario Cabrera Trejo died of a heart-attack en route to the emergency room. Arrangements to transport Trejo to a hospital by ambulance were delayed by hours because the nurse on duty could not reach the Adams' physician by phone. In March 2012, 39-year old Juan Villaneueva died of lung cancer which had metastasized to his brain. In March 2012, 39-year old Juan Villaneueva died of lung cancer which had metastasized to his brain. Doctors at the facility failed to diagnose Villaneueva's condition over a period of years despite repeated reports of pain, shortness of breath, dramatic weight loss, and the fact that he was coughing up blood. At the time of his death, Villaneueva was serving a 41 month federal sentence for "being a deported alien found in the United States."



Credit: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Key Areas of Concern

- Medical neglect
- Barriers to legal access
- Due process violations
- Under-staffing
- Lack of Spanish-speaking staff

"Doctors at the facility failed to diagnose Villaneueva's condition over a period of years despite repeated reports of pain, shortness of breath, dramatic weight loss, and the fact that he was coughing up blood"

In 2012, a riot at the facility resulted in the death of a correctional officer and injuries to approximately 20 staff and detained persons. In [press statements](#), individuals detained at Adams attributed the unrest to medical neglect leading to death, widespread use of solitary confinement, spoiled food, lack of access to Spanish-language interpreters and staff, and mistreatment by staff. According to a 2016 [article](#) by The Intercept, at the time of the riot, the majority of those detained at the facility were Mexican nationals and approximately one-third of those detained were serving sentences for illegal re-entry.

A December 2016 [audit](#) by the DoJ OIG cited a BOP after-action report which found deficiencies in staffing levels, staff experience, and communication between staff and detained person as contributing causes to the riot. The 2016 audit stated that, four years after the riot, the facility continued to be “plagued by the same significant deficiencies in correctional and health services and Spanish-speaking staffing.” The audit found that Adams had misreported its staffing levels in many of its monthly reports following the riot. The audit also found that, as of February 2016, only three Adams staff members spoke Spanish, while the majority of 2,3000 persons detained in the facility were Spanish speakers. The audit also cited severe under-staffing in health services. Between December 2012 and September 2015, Adams was staffed with only a single physician for 434 days (43% of the time) and a single dentist for 689 days (69% of the time). The audit also cited deficiencies in the facility’s grievance process.

On-Going Concerns

Legal services providers express concern with the remote nature of the Adams facility, which is located two hours away from Jackson. Advocates and legal services providers report that many of those currently detained in Adams are asylum-seekers and the victims of an August 2019 workplace [raid](#) which resulted in 680 arrests. In a July 2019 [press statement](#), Laura Rivera, an attorney at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reported that many of her clients transferred to Adams from other ICE facilities do not appear in the ICE Detainee Locator, making it difficult for her to ascertain their whereabouts and provide quality representation.

In [October 2019](#), advocacy group the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) reported that 700 women had been moved from the Karnes County Residential Center in Texas and were not listed in the ICE Detainee Locator. In [December 2019](#), the group reported that all but 87 of these women were listed in the ICE Detainee Locator. The group reported that many of the remaining 87 women are being held in Adams. RAICES staff who visited the facility reported that rooms had no heating, with indoor temperatures dropping to as low as 22 degrees Fahrenheit. RAICES staff also reported a dearth of legal services, with the nearest immigration attorney located two hours away and the nearest non-profit legal provider located an hour and a half away from the facility. In addition, women detained at the facility reported lack of interpretation services, poor or severely delayed medical care, and that they had not been informed who their Deportation Officer is.

Those detained in Mississippi also face significant barriers to release. In [May 2019](#), the SPLC and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a class action on behalf of 12 individuals detained in the Deep South. The lawsuit alleged that ICE is violating its own procedures by failing to grant individualized parole hearings to asylum seekers, and instead issuing blanket denials of parole (for more information on barriers to release in the Deep South, please see LA5). In September 2019, a federal judge issued a [preliminary injunction](#) instructing ICE’s New Orleans field office (which covers individuals detained in Mississippi) to resume individualized parole hearings. However, legal services providers and advocates continue to report high rates of parole denials. In September 2019, ICE [deported](#) Yoel Alonso Yeal, a Cuban asylum seeker and the lead plaintiff in the SPLC and ACLU’s lawsuit. In the months preceding his deportation, Yeal was detained at Adams and in ICE facilities in Louisiana. He applied for and was denied parole several times. At the time of his deportation, Yeal suffered from severe gout and a cancerous tumor in his lung, health conditions Yeal’s wife, Midalis Rodriguez, alleges worsened due to medical neglect in ICE custody. In a July 2019 [press statement](#), Rodriguez characterized medical services at Adams as even worse than those in ICE facilities in Louisiana.

Resources

- [Working Together Jackson](#)
- [Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance](#)
- [Catholic Charities of Jackson - Immigration Clinic](#)
- [Voces Unidas Louisiana Immigrant Rights Coalition](#)