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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Puente Human Rights Movement hosts “Comply & Release Freedom Caravan” at 4th Ave Jail  
to be followed by Women’s History Month Vigil at Perryville Prison**

**Phoenix, Arizona**--In observation of the first year anniversary of COVID-19 hitting Arizona jails, prisons, and detention centers, and in honor of the 55 lives lost behind bars since the beginning of the pandemic, Puente Human Rights Movement (Puente) is holding it’s second Comply & Release Freedom Caravan this Friday, March 19, at 4th Avenue Jail in Phoenix. This week’s Freedom Caravan will be followed by a vigil outside Perryville Prison this Sunday, March 21.

During the pandemic, Puente received phone calls to their hotline from community members inside 4th Avenue Jail who reported conditions of confinement at the jail including: no access to cleaning supplies; clogged toilets and drinking fountains; no practice of social distancing; no PPE provided; and rotten food served 1-2 times a day. 4th Avenue Jail is one of 5 jails under the supervision of the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office. According to Puente’s recent report, “[Human Rights Report on the State of Confinement & Detention During COVID-19](#),”

*“...callers exposed neglectful actions undertaken by MCSO staff that risked the population to illness; we received reports of booking officers not wearing face masks or not social distancing, and staff not changing gloves or not using hand sanitizer after touching or treating incarcerated people. [...] Another [incarcerated individual] reported having adverse heart conditions and still being forced to share a cell with two people who tested positive for COVID-19.”* (pg. 15)

Just last week, the U.S. Department of Justice requested to hold a contempt hearing for Maricopa County Sheriff Penzone in the same profiling lawsuit that former Sheriff Arpaio was held in contempt of. The DOJ argued that Penzone’s failure to comply with time limits within which to complete internal investigations has contributed to a lack of accountability for officer misconduct.

Today’s action will be followed by a second action outside all-female ADOCRR facility Perryville Prison on Sunday, March 21 in commemoration of Women’s History Month. Women are the fastest growing prison population in Arizona, and Indigenous women and women of color are disproportionately impacted. As of March 15, 2021, ADOCRR confirmed 12,058 positive cases and 55 total deaths across all facilities (2 more deaths have occurred in the last week alone), with a positivity rate of 32.67% out of the tested population.

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*Puente Human Rights Movement is a grassroots migrant justice organization based in Phoenix, Arizona that develops, educates, and empowers migrant communities to protect and defend families and communities.*