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New Report on Human Rights Violations in Arizona's Carceral System During COVID-19

Phoenix, Arizona--Phoenix-based non-profit organization Puente Human Rights Movement has released a new report entitled "Human Rights Report on the State of Confinement & Detention During COVID-19." The report details the ongoing human rights abuses that have occurred at Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADOCRR) prisons, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) jails, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers during the coronavirus pandemic. The report relies on hundreds of phone calls to Puente's hotline from people incarcerated at jails, prisons, and detention centers and their family members, statistical data from ADOCRR and MCSO, and case studies of hunger strikes, the criminalization of #BlackLivesMatter protestors during the pandemic, the misuse of policy including Title 42, and other key events and patterns that Puente has observed and investigated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The human rights report paints a dire picture of the situation in Arizona's jails, prisons, and detention centers, where at least 30 people have died of COVID-19 (although ICE has yet to release their full COVID-19 data), as well as of the Arizona carceral system as a whole, which abuses and misuses policy and the public's trust to operate as a deportation machine during a deadly pandemic. Puente's report uncovers information on ADOCRR funding, lack of spending transparency, flagrant disregard for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and international human rights standards as well as the institution's own COVID-19 memos, and ongoing failure to stop the spread of COVID-19 in its facilities. The report also documents the abhorrent conditions in MCSO's jails, and MCSO's continued practice of moving and transporting people who are charged and detained between various facilities and cities, furthering the spread of COVID-19. The full report is available for download at www.puenteaz.org/humanrightscenter.

The release of the report comes less than one week after the launch of Puente's "Comply and Release" campaign which aims to end medical neglect in Arizona's prisons, jails, and detention centers. Puente's Comply & Release campaign is working to bring ongoing human rights abuses to the public eye, reminding the people of Arizona that our loved ones who are detained are human and are deserving of their human rights and dignity. For information on the campaign including a full list of demands, visit www.puenteaz.org/complyandrelease.

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