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NEWS

‘Something is fundamentally wrong:’ Detainees start hunger strike at Pa. ICE facility

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A billboard protesting Moshannon Valley Processing Center sits outside the entrance of the ICE facility in Clearfield County. Joshua Vaughn/PennLive

By Vida Lashgari | for PennLive and Joy Donald | for PennLive

A man started gagging and lost consciousness Wednesday evening inside an ICE detention center in Pennsylvania, and staff failed to give him proper medical attention, according to a source inside the facility.

Instead, staff at the Moshannon Valley Processing Center in Clearfield County told other detainees to help him, according to one man who witnessed the incident.

“He vomited a green substance and fainted,” the man said. “His body was white. He was shaking and sweating and officials paid no attention to him.”

According to the man, who asked not to be named to avoid retaliation, this was the third person to be hospitalized after facing similar symptoms.

He said staff told detainees it was a “common cold” but family members of people inside the facility speculate that they could be suffering from an intestinal infection.

As a result of this medical emergency, men on his block have undertaken a hunger strike to protest the conditions inside the facility.

What started with 70 people participating in the strike on Thursday morning, escalated to roughly 100 people by Friday morning on Unit Four of the facility, the man said.

“We plan to continue the strike until the media can release the unjust situation we are living in,” he said.

Craig Shagin, the man’s attorney, confirmed he heard about the hunger strike at Moshannon.

The men are pushing for better medical care from GEO Group, which operates Moshannon Valley Processing Center, and changes to the food given to detainees.

The man said meals often include bread, milk and water. However, the bread is typically stale, and the milk sometimes has had black substances in it, or is curdled, he said. The man told PennLive he recently found worms floating in his water.

Separate reports in 2024 by the [ACLU-Pa](#) and by the [Temple University School of Law](#) identified similar, systemic complaints about medical neglect and spoiled, unhealthy and insufficient food being served to the people inside.

“We have found worms in our water, bugs in our food and today I found a black substance in my milk container,” the man said. “The conditions here are terrible.”

Shagin also confirmed men had been getting sick from the food.

According to the man, who arrived in the U.S. in 2014 and is seeking asylum from gang violence in Honduras, three detainees were taken off the block after the first day of the strike without reason and with no indication of where they were taken.

These conditions highlight a lack of humanity provided to people inside Moshannon, according Jaime Martinez, executive director of the Pittsburgh-based nonprofit Frontline Dignity.

“A hunger strike is a sign that something is fundamentally wrong,” Martinez said. “No one should have to withhold food to be seen, heard, or treated as fully human. We have an urgent obligation to respond to what our neighbors are enduring every day.”

Lenny Oddo, facility administrator of Moshannon Valley Processing Center, declined to comment about the hunger strike, citing concerns for the privacy of detainees.

PennLive reporter Joshua Vaughn contributed to this report.

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