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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Trump Administration Sued for Lack of Access to Legal Representation for Detainees at "Alligator Alcatraz"**

*Plaintiffs are represented by the ACLU and the organization Americans for Immigrant Justice.*

**San Juan, P.R.** - Immigrant rights advocates sued the Trump administration on Wednesday over the lack of access to legal representation and due process violations for people detained at "Alligator Alcatraz," the notorious new migrant detention center in Florida, built on an abandoned runway in the middle of the Ochopee wetlands.

This case is brought by detained individuals, legal service providers, and law firms with clients detained at the facility, including Florida Keys Immigration, Sanctuary of the South, U.S. Immigration Law Counsel, Victoria Slatton of Sanabria & Associates, and The Law Offices of Catherine Perez, PLLC. The plaintiffs are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the ACLU of Florida, and Americans for Immigrant Justice.

The lawsuit denounces the government for blocking attorneys' access to the detention center and imposing restrictions that hinder the filing of necessary legal documents for the detainees' release. The government has banned in-person visits, any confidential communication via phone or video, and the confidential exchange of written documents.

These restrictions violate the detainees' First and Fifth Amendment rights, as well as the First Amendment rights of the legal services organizations and law firms with clients held at the facility.

"This detention facility opens another nefarious chapter in our nation's history. Its very existence is based on our country's lowest impulses and shows the danger posed by unchecked governmental authority when coupled with unbridled hatred. It represents an assault on common decency, and in this case, the treatment of the detained individuals is also illegal," stated Eunice Cho, Senior Staff Attorney for the ACLU's National Prison Project and lead counsel on the case.

The facility is constructed with temporary tents, trailers, and barbed wire fences. It is surrounded by alligators, pythons, mosquitoes, and swamp land, and is at risk of dangerous flooding. According to the lawsuit, at least 700 people are currently held at the facility.

Detainees and members of Congress who have visited the site report deplorable conditions, including scorching temperatures, heavy mosquito presence, flooding inside the tents, lack of access to water, and clogged toilets and sewage (detainees have described being forced to unclog toilets with their own hands), inadequate food, and denial of religious rights.

"What's happening here isn't just a policy failure—it's a moral failure," said Bacardi Jackson, Executive Director of the ACLU of Florida. "The state has hastily erected an expensive, deadly, hidden prison in the middle of the Everglades during hurricane season to warehouse human beings, stripping them of due process and dignity, isolating them from their families and their lawyers, intentionally putting their lives in danger, and leaving them to suffer in silence," she underscored.

According to the complaint, several attorneys arrived at the checkpoint on the road to the detention center to request in-person meetings with their clients, without success. Attorneys were met at the checkpoint by armed members of the Florida National Guard and state police, who said requests for attorney-client meetings would be "communicated" to the facility. Hours later, they were informed that no in-person visits would be allowed.

In recent days, the ACLU of Puerto Rico was informed about the transfer of detainees from the archipelago to this facility in Florida. Similarly, the local office has received information regarding rights violations and dehumanizing treatment.

"From the ACLU of Puerto Rico, we support and remain attentive to the development of this lawsuit, whose objective is to protect and uphold the constitutional protections that cover all people, starting with human dignity," stated Annette Martínez Orabona, Executive Director of the ACLU of Puerto Rico.

The government has also failed to provide information on how detainees and attorneys can have confidential phone calls. Furthermore, the facility requires reviewing the submission of any documents that attorneys plan to review with their clients.

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