



February 07, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Contact:

Steven Wu, Woori Juntos

steven@woorijuntos.org; (225) 330-1065

Monique Joseph, Communities Not Cages Member

Mjosephbeard@gmail.com; (281) 704-8520

Krish Gundu, Texas Jail Project

krish.gundu@texasjailproject.org; (281) 854-4104

Mo Cortez, Grassroots Leadership

mcortez@grassrootsleadership.org; (512) 521-9190

Ms. Sarah Knight, Communities Not Cages Member

(832) 305-2216

State Regulatory Agency Invites OAG to Escalate Compliance Enforcement Against Harris County Jail, while advocates call for decarceration

At their first quarterly meeting of the year on February 6, 2025, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards (TCJS) escalated their action against Harris County for its years-long failure to remedy the Harris County Jail crisis by asking the Texas Attorney General to assist in compliance enforcement by means of litigation as allowed under [current Texas Administrative Code](#). TCJS has found the Harris County jail [non-compliant](#), almost continuously, with minimum jail standards for over three years, and the County has failed to comply despite a [remedial order](#)

in place for almost two years. The County has also repeatedly failed to implement policies that would decrease the jail population, despite admitting to clear hyperincarceration.

“The fiscal and human cost of non-compliance has been enormous. Since 2021 we have spent over \$58 million annually in transferring and housing thousands of pretrial detainees out of state. The three in-custody deaths in Louisiana, along with the 78 in our county jail since 2021 till date, have been a direct result of hyperincarceration.” Krish Gundu, co-founder and executive director of Texas Jail Project a non-profit statewide group that has been [monitoring jail conditions](#) and [custody deaths](#) for years.

At the same meeting, similar but more aggressive action, including an injunction from the OAG, was initiated against Liberty County, which TCJS staff say may result in the jail being shut down and pretrial detainees forcibly transferred to other county jails. Representatives with the Attorney General’s office indicated that moving forward with an injunction which would involve litigation, is up to their office’s discretion and that the process could take up to a year.

Yesterday’s action makes clear that Harris County’s reliance on hyperincarceration is a failed strategy. Harris County’s attempts at fixing the jail—shipping community members to other county jails, including in Louisiana and Mississippi, sometimes resulting in their deaths; adding new district courts to deal with the court backlog, raising salaries for detention officers and offering sign-on bonuses — have all failed. TCJS’ decision sends a clear message: continuing to expand the criminal legal system is a failed strategy. Harris County officials need to depopulate the jail and cannot build another one.

“Robust recommendations, such as the [Justice Management Institute’s](#) expert advice, to depopulate the jail have been on the table since June of 2020,” said Monique Joseph, Community Advocate.

“The county has doubled down on criminalization of people with mental illness and unhoused populations instead of following all those recommendations,” said Ms. Sarah Knight whose 29-year-old son [Jaleen Anderson died in LaSalle Correctional facility](#) after being transferred from Harris county jail to Louisiana.

“Instead of repeating the failed punitive strategy, officials must invest in community services,” said Mo Cortez, Policy Organizer with Grassroots Leadership. *“[Real solutions](#), like affordable and supportive housing, direct financial assistance, timely access to community-based mental healthcare including crisis-respite, economic opportunities, after-school programs, and education actually keep people safe. Depopulating the jail is a step in the right direction.”*

###

Communities Not Cages (CNC) is a network of community members, organizations, and directly impacted people fighting against jail expansion and for decarceration in Harris County.

CNC Members and Supporters include:

Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons
Fort Bend Coalition For Palestine
Grassroots Leadership
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Madres del Parque
Michelle Mikeska
Monique Joseph
Muizz Akhtar
Houston Abolitionist Collective
Houston Leads
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Sarah Knight
Hannah Payne
Texas Abolitionists
Texas Black Migrant Ecosystem
Texas Civil Rights Project
Texas Jail Project
Texas Rising
Woori Juntos