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MEDIA CONTACT
Miriam Krinsky
krinskym@krinsky.la
818-416-5218

FJP Statement on Need for Action to Address Alarming Conditions in Texas Jails and Prisons

[Fair and Just Prosecution](#) Executive Director Miriam Krinsky issued the following statement in response to reports of extremely poor conditions in Texas jails and prisons in the wake of the recent unprecedented storm and power outages sweeping the state:

“All across Texas people are suffering, but we cannot ignore or neglect the thousands of people behind bars. Over [35,000](#) people are detained in Texas jails for crimes of which they have not been convicted, often simply because they are too poor to post bail. Many do not have water, heat, or enough food. Yet some judges are apparently refusing to even hold hearings to consider lower bail amounts. This is inconsistent with American principles of fairness and due process. And these punishing conditions – that are an affront to human rights – are not justice.

In Houston, media and advocates report that almost [9,000](#) people are packed in an [overcrowded](#) jail with no running water, [limited food](#), and overflowing toilets. People are sleeping on the floor in freezing temperatures. People have not received needed healthcare and a man has already [died](#).

Not only have many of these people not been tried or convicted of anything, but many are accused of relatively minor crimes like drug possession or low-level theft. If they were wealthy, they’d be at home, but they’re trapped in horrific and life threatening conditions because they can’t post bail. Some are also detained on parole holds, with no public safety reason to keep them behind bars.

I urge criminal justice leaders, in Houston and across the state, to do everything in their power to address this crisis *now*. Now is the time to hold emergency hearings to reevaluate bail amounts. Poverty should not risk becoming a death sentence.

I also call on the U.S. Department of Justice to engage and announce an immediate civil rights investigation into these conditions. Immediate action is essential. Countless lives are at stake.”

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Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit our [website](#) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).