

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SacRideHuman has sent the following statement to the Sacramento Regional Transit Board:

We have reviewed the Sacramento Regional Transit (RT) staff issue paper for the Monday, March 28, 2016 agenda item 12.2 regarding RT's multi-million dollar contract with the British-Danish G4S corporation.

We find the staff's defense of G4S to be incongruous with the overall improvements that RT says it wants to make in its image and service.

When RT hires a contractor, it becomes associated with that company's image and reputation. We and others have provided RT staff and board with overwhelming evidence of G4S' abuses of human rights, labor rights, rights of the child, and international law. We fail to understand why RT staff would support continuing to contract with such a disreputable company, especially when the terms of the contract permit its non-renewal with no questions asked.

The staff report mentions brave actions by individual RT G4S workers, but it fails to mention that the G4S symbol on those workers' uniforms stands for a multinational corporation known for its human rights violations around the world. That same G4S symbol is the one worn by G4S prison guards in Britain and Florida who have been exposed for abusing youth inmates and the ones in South Africa who are now being sued for torturing prisoners.

RT's security workers should not have to be associated with a multinational company complicit with human rights violations. They can do a good job for RT and our community either as RT employees or employees of a locally or at least California-owned company that is not associated with human rights violations.

The staff report notes G4S is a "large" company, but bigger is not necessarily better, and in G4S's case, it is worse. Also, RT's recently approved significant reduction in its private security needs warrants the issuance of a new proposal that allows other locally and California/U.S.-owned companies to bid. As we have pointed out, G4S should not have been granted "local business" preference points in the previous competition; those should go only to businesses that truly are locally owned.

Yes, RT staff have worked with G4S for some years now, but RT is certainly capable of working with another company. We understand that guards need to be trained, but there is already turnover among the private security workers, so continual training is par for the course. It is reasonable to expect that better paid and benefited workers would have less turnover – a good reason for bringing all the private security workers in-house.

We also want to point out that RT's G4S workers were exempted from a collective bargaining agreement with SEIU Service Workers West that took effect last summer. For RT to continue a contract with G4S that precludes unionization of its workers is not acceptable.

While the Department of Transportation may not have debarred G4S, the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee published criticism of G4S as a military contractor and G4S facilities in Florida have been called a disgrace to the state by a grand jury.

In a de facto admission of guilt, G4S has recently said it will sell its contracts for private youth prisons in Britain after repeated abuses of child inmates was exposed, as well as sell the part of its business that has been servicing Israel's illegal settlements and prisons in which Palestinian political prisoners, including children, have been abused. We hope that G4S will make good on these promises, but even if it does, G4S will continue to profit from these contracts for at least the next one or two years. And G4S will continue to profit from private prisons and abuses elsewhere.

We again call your attention to the fact that several prominent institutions have divested from G4S because of its complicity with human rights violations and/or its profiting from private prisons. Among those making such well-considered decisions are the Gates Foundation, the United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Quakers, Mennonites, Presbyterians, and the University of California.

Again, we ask that Sacramento Regional Transit take the action requested by over five dozen organizations and more than 1,500 individuals to not extend RT's contract with G4S.