

Prison Justice Network *updates* Spring 2020

unceded Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo lands (Surrey, BC)



(with thanks to PASAN for permission to use its and Red Dress Productions' image, above)

INSIDE: resources, calls to action, news, and inspiration in these covid19 times by, for, & with prisoners/detainees!

There's a new telephone number for people incarcerated in Alouette to call (collect calls accepted) about coronavirus/covid19 organized by a member of the Spartacus Books collective – if you have “a direct line to communicating with someone in Alouette” please contact Spartacus for the number. “Also peeps are covering costs themselves so if anyone can help in small financial ways that's great too. Information and mutual aid are more important, though.”

Spartacus Books, 3378 Findlay Street, x̱m̱əθḵəy̱əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔṯ (Tsleil-Waututh) territory, Vancouver, BC V5N 4E7, (604) 688-6138, info@spartacusbooks.net, <https://spartacusbooks.net>

Solidarity and Resource Exchange on the Coast Salish Lands

“connects people offering help and support to people who need it. We've created it to support mutual aid efforts and resource exchange projects”

info@vancouvsupport.ca, <https://coda.io/@awsamuel/vancouver-mutual-aid>

Downtown Eastside and COVID-19, (604) 655-0276, <https://fb.me/DTESCOVID>

WISH Drop In Centre “Improving the health & safety of #women involved in street-based #sexwork.” <https://twitter.com/WISHvancouver>, 334 Alexander Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 1C3, (604) 669-WISH (9474), fax (604) 669-9479

STAND for Prison Justice: Students Taking A New Direction For Prison Justice
UBC law students organize campaigns and help <https://fb.me/PrisonJusticeUBC>

Prison Justice Network c/o Michael Ma, Criminology Department,
Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 12666 72nd Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 2M8

“Social solidarity is important in this time. It is crucial that people listen to health authorities and take social distancing seriously. We must be careful, however, not to invest in policing or authoritarian responses to this crisis that, under the comforting idea of ‘public safety’ end up further endangering the very communities who are most at risk.” by El Jones
<https://halifaxexaminer.ca/featured/we-face-a-public-health-emergency-and-criminalizing-the-marginalized-can-worsen-the-crisis>

Contain COVID, Not People: No One is Disposable Take action - **demand** the Prime Minister, your Member of Parliament, and your provincial representative “begin the work necessary to pave the way for **de-carceral and de-colonial futures for those currently subject to confinement** through redistributing the vast resources of this country towards meeting the basic needs of all.”
<https://cp-ep.org/nooneisdisposable>
Criminalization and Punishment Education Project, Aaron Doyle, Department of Sociology, Carleton University, Loeb Building – Room D793, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6, (613) 520-2600 extension 1914, aaron_doyle@carleton.ca,

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Gidimt'en Checkpoint We are strong, Wet'suwet'en peoples - utilizing, occupying, and protecting our traditional UNCEDED territories <https://twitter.com/Gidimten>

Call To Action: Hunger Strikers Released as CBSA Resists Demands to Release Remaining Detainees Solidarité sans frontières, (514) 809-0773,

solidaritesansfrontieres@gmail.com,

<https://solidarityacrossborders.org/en/release-remaining-detainees>

"Continue to pressure the government for the immediate release of all detainees!

Use the hashtag set: #FreeThemAll #StatusForAll to show your support on social

media Send support statements to detenuslaval@gmail.com Direct calls and

emails to: Federal Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair Bill.Blair@parl.gc.ca

Telephone: 613-995-0284 Fax: 613-996-6309" by Robyn Maynard



Stop The Spread Of Racism

<https://stopthespread.ca>

"Ignorance Has Reached Epidemic Proportions

"The world is not well.

As COVID-19 spreads

globally, so too does

racism and

discrimination against

the Chinese and Asian

community. A dizzying

amount of

misinformation in

conjunction with

preconceived prejudice has led to irrational fear. With fear has come chronic xenophobia, causing Chinese and Asian people, businesses and communities to suffer greatly."

"Remember, Skin Colour Is Not A Symptom

"...You can help to stop the spread of racism. Speak up to take a stand when you see or experience acts of discrimination."

Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, national@ccncsj.ca,

<http://ccncsj.ca>

**Prison Justice Network c/o Michael Ma, Criminology Department,
Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 12666 72nd Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 2M8**

ask Trudeau to “ADD aid for Gaza and other extremely vulnerable international communities, including refugees, to ADD aid for Canada’s migrant and undocumented workers, to ADD aid for those under immigration authority, to ADD aid for Canada's poor and marginalized.”

Canadians for Justice & Peace in the Middle East, 580 Sainte-Croix Avenue, Suite 060, Montreal, QC H4L 3X5, (438) 380-5410, https://www.cjpme.org/dont_forget

“email...Colombian authorities denouncing the March 21, 2020 massacre at La Modelo Prison” “Please send an email to Colombian authorities denouncing the March 21, 2020 massacre at La Modelo Prison by Colombian authorities that left 23 dead and over 90 wounded. The prisoners were protesting filthy conditions and extreme overcrowding that has turned the penitentiary system into a breeding ground for Corona Virus.”

afgj.salsalabs.org/nomoremassacresnomorecoronavirusingcolombianprisons

“Take action now - Send an email and urge [Turkey] Minister of Justice Abdülhamit Gül to **include imprisoned journalists, human rights defenders and others** imprisoned for exercising their rights, people in pre-trial detention and others at particular risk from COVID-19 **for release.**” <https://amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/turkey-covid-19-prisoners-release>

“demand Israeli authorities take immediate action to release all Palestinian child detainees in Israeli prisons due to the rapid global spread of the COVID-19 virus.”

Defense for Children International - Palestine, (646) 912-8093

[https://nwttac.dci-](https://nwttac.dci-palestine.org/petition_israel_must_release_all_palestinian_child_detainees_amid_covid_19_pandemic)

[palestine.org/petition_israel_must_release_all_palestinian_child_detainees_amid_covid_19_pandemic](https://nwttac.dci-palestine.org/petition_israel_must_release_all_palestinian_child_detainees_amid_covid_19_pandemic)

Endorse Open Letter on Coronavirus, Mass Incarceration, and U.S. Prison Imperialism

“1. Freedom for each inmate of an advanced age and for all those persons incarcerated for nonviolent crimes.

“2. ...prison population and whoever works there have the tools and the conditions necessary to prevent exposure to the coronavirus.

“3. ...maintain the medical personnel with the tools and access to clinics...

“4. ...US abandon...mass incarceration and its expansion to other countries.

We also demand that the countries involved in Prison Imperialism abandon this...”

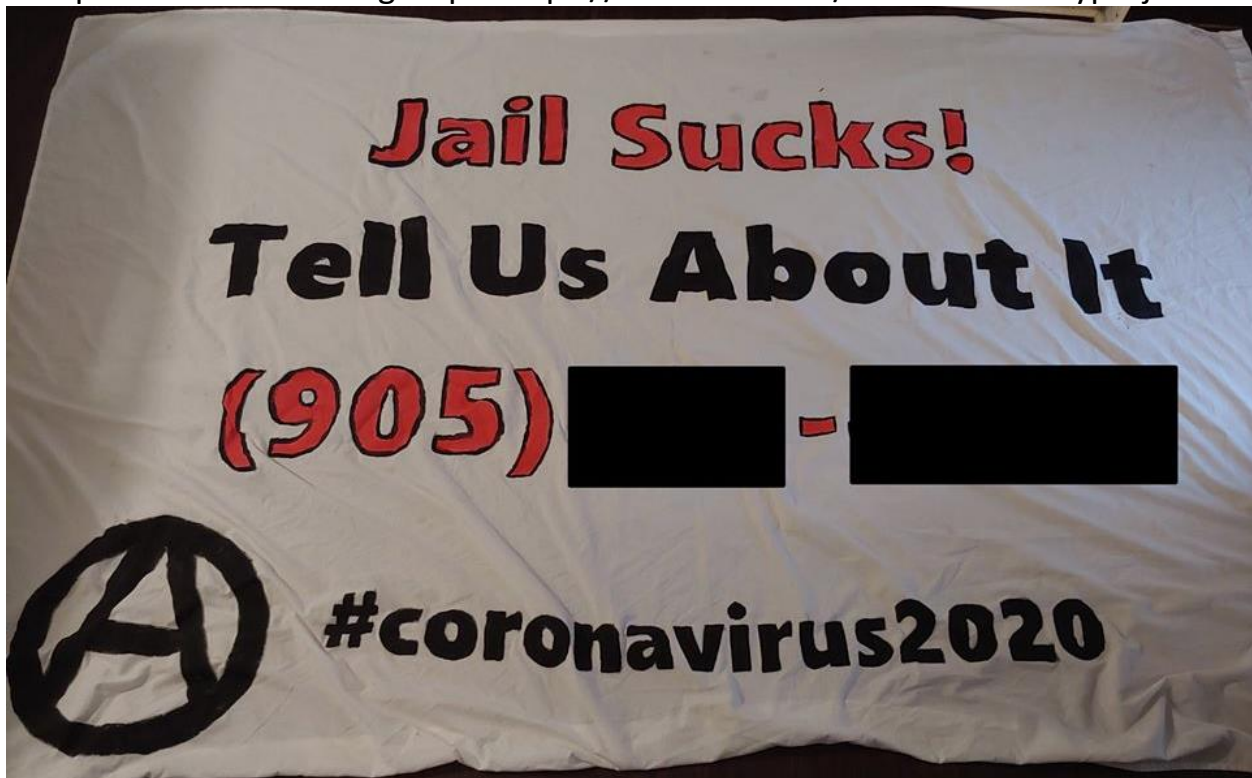
Alliance for Global Justice, (202) 540-8336, James@AFGJ.org,

<https://afgj.salsalabs.org/endorseopenletteroncoronavirusandusprisonimperialism>



“The Barton Prisoner Solidarity Project has set up a **phone line for prisoners in Barton jail** [in/around Hamilton, Ontario] **to call to provide updates and communicate messages during this pandemic.** We painted a banner reading ‘Jail Sucks, Tell Us About It’ with the phone number below and stood outside the jail windows. Within minutes our phone

line was blowing up with calls from people eager to have their voices heard and ask questions about our group.” <https://facebook.com/bartonsolidarityproject>



Map of COVID-19 Cases Behind Bars, contact@covid19behindbars.com,
<https://covid19behindbars.com>

we heard that **prisoners are in lockdown at Fraser Valley Institution** and probably others (about **Mission**, see page 19 below)

Prison Justice Network c/o Michael Ma, Criminology Department,
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“COVID-19: Tensions rising in crowded B.C. jails” by Kim Bolan

“Shelly Bazuik, of Prisoners’ Legal Services, said Monday [March 30] that she’s hearing from an increasing number of clients concerned about their cramped living conditions inside B.C.’s correctional institutions during the coronavirus crisis.”

“Bazuik’s agency is one of 70 across the country that has called for the release of non-violent offenders from provincial and federal prisons in response to the pandemic.”

“Hope Latham, of the B.C. Ministry of Public Safety, said in an email that **B.C. Corrections is conducting ‘a risk assessment ... for non-violent sentenced individuals for early release.’**” <https://vancouversun.com/news/covid-19-tensions-rising-in-crowded-b-c-jails>

“ ‘Almost a death sentence’: Okanagan Correctional Centre has COVID-19 case” by Chelsea Powrie

“Francis Amendt, a senior and mother of an incarcerated man, said her son called her early Thursday [April 2] morning with the news.

“ ‘He called at 8 o’clock this morning and said one of the inmates there has COVID-19,’ she said. “They don’t know how he got it so they don’t know how many people are going to end up being infected now.”

According to Amendt, her son said the infected man has been incarcerated for six months so may have gotten the virus from a corrections officer or a lawyer, and that he is a member of her son’s unit.

“ ‘There’s about 40 people in the area that he is in, really no bigger than an average house, and they are allowed to move around and interact. So by the time this guy’s symptoms showed up, who knows how many people he had interacted with?’ Amendt said.

“Her son has just 18 days left in his sentence, having been locked up since January. She wonders whether this will affect his release.

“ ‘Will he even be allowed to get out? Where do they go for quarantine?’ she said, explaining that they had planned for him to come home and live with her and her husband, but as senior citizens, that’s concerning.

“Shannon Vieville is another woman who heard news of COVID-19 in the correctional centre, receiving a call from her boyfriend Lonnie Adams, an inmate, Thursday morning.

“ ‘He called me and said ‘Baby, there’s an outbreak, the warden came and told us this morning,’ Vieville said.

Her boyfriend has six months left in his sentence and has been behind bars for a year and a half. Vieville says he is a unit representative and has been cleaning up his act while incarcerated, and is terrified the virus might halt his progress.

“He’s come a long way in his life and he deserves not to die that’s for sure,” Vieville said. Amendt said her son worries that the virus will take lives.

“ ‘He feels it’s almost a death sentence for some of them that are in there. Some people are not the healthiest,’ she said. “If this starts spreading through the jails it’s going to be very serious.’ ”

<https://castanet.net/news/Penticton/296249/Okanagan-Correctional-Centre-inmates-claim-COVID-19-case>

Kent prison here in Lower Mainland “in virtual lockdown”

“Simon Cheung, with Prisoners’ Legal Services in B.C., reported that conditions haven’t substantially changed at the Kent Institution, near Vancouver. A floor flooded last week [March 8-14], since then prisons have been in virtual lockdown. The water was only half drained, Cheung says. Two days after the flooding, prisoners were given just 15 minutes out of their cell. ‘They had to choose between mopping up the water and taking a shower,’ Cheung says. Prisoners report that the jail is absolutely filthy and strewn with garbage.”

by Justin Ling <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/the-dark-side-of-canadas-coronavirus-response>

Getting Out Of KRCC Be Like...



(KRCC is
Kamloops
Regional
Correctional
Centre)
by Arnie Tre Tre

Union of BC Indian Chiefs demands immediate release of all non-violent offenders as part of COVID-19 pandemic response

- Immediately develop release plans for low-risk and non-violent offenders;
 - Proactively identify all inmates who may be nearing eligibility for parole or statutory release and begin facilitating release plans;
 - Ensure corrections facilities have updated pandemic preparedness plans and adequate medical resources to humanely treat inmates who may contract the virus, including plans for quarantine and isolation that do not rely on over-use of solitary confinement;
 - Provide free calling and video-calling access for all incarcerated people to mitigate the consequences of lost visitations; and
 - Immediately call for the full decarceration of Indigenous youth in custody wherever possible, in line with the intentions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.
- https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/open_letter_ubcic_demands_immediate_release_of_all_non_violent_offenders_as_part_of_covid_19

“Earlier this week [beginning March 15], a federal prison in central Alberta [Bowden, near Innisfail] was **locked down** as a precaution as some inmates who showed flu-like symptoms were waiting for test results for COVID-19.” by Terry Haig <https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2020/03/20/covid-19-enters-the-canadian-prison-system>

“Canada's Prisons Are a Coronavirus Time Bomb, Say Guards and Inmates”

“In the past week, I’ve spoken to more than a dozen inmates, family members of those incarcerated, lawyers, and prison guards. People in the prison system are anxious, afraid, and in the dark.”

“Inmates aren’t waiting to find out what happens next—they are organizing. In Prince Albert, the inmate wellness committee has hired Ottawa lawyer Michael Spratt to explore a possible legal challenge to how the government and prisons are handling COVID-19. “We want to know what our rights are,” [Prince Albert prisoner] Michael said.

“[Federal Correctional Investigator] Zinger said his office has seen ‘a surge of complaints from inmates with respect to how institutions are managing the pandemic.’ ‘Canada’s prisons are unhygienic, the relationship between inmates and guards is fraught, facilities are decrepit, the quality of healthcare is shameful. All of those problems seem set to collide during this pandemic.’ ”

by Justin Ling https://vice.com/en_ca/article/jge4yy/canadas-prisons-are-a-coronavirus-time-bomb-say-guards-and-inmates

“El Jones interviews a prisoner at Burnside about what it’s like to be in jail during a pandemic”

“You can see the tension. It’s affecting everybody. People are panicking. Because, obviously, there’s a lot of people here that are dealing with pre-existing mental health issues.

“And when you’re relying on other people in authority that have only shown abuse over years and years, there’s going to be a heightened sense of mistrust.

“How are people coping?

“Everybody’s just panicking. They’re trying, but you know, the news gets on the TV every day, and, it’s hard.

“I had a bail hearing in place [information about case redacted for privacy] but the judge called and said we’re not going to go forward. It’s not an emergency. I’m really bothered by this. If I were given the opportunity for a hearing maybe I could explain myself and I’d be able to get out.”

<https://halifaxexaminer.ca/featured/el-jones-interviews-a-prisoner-at-burnside-about-what-its-like-to-be-in-jail-during-a-pandemic>



early release considered federally, 42 released from provincial jails in Nova Scotia

"On Tuesday [March 24], Public Safety Minister Bill Blair asked the heads of Canada's prison system and parole board to consider early release for some federal inmates to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 behind bars."

"At the provincial level in Nova Scotia, the Justice Department has released 42 inmates who were serving intermittent sentences in jails."

by Elizabeth McMillan <https://cbc.ca/amp/1.5516664> image: seen on #CareNotCages

"...calls by others for **urgent decarceration strategies to prevent an outbreak in prisons**. The union representing legal aid workers and staff in Saskatchewan has already asked governments to release low-risk, non-violent prisoners on the grounds that an outbreak would threaten the health and safety of prisoners, staff and local hospitals. Similarly, the League of Rights and Freedoms also called on Quebec government to reduce the prison population to avoid the virus spreading like 'wildfire'.

"In Ontario, some low-risk prisoners are being released early to help stem the spread of the virus in the province's jails.

"Newfoundland and Labrador's justice minister has also indicated that the province is considering temporary absences for prisoners during the pandemic, arguing that jails are 'petri dishes for the spread of the virus' and that it could spread like a 'crashing avalanche' if the government doesn't act now. Even the United States, the country with the highest incarceration rate in the world, has begun to release prisoners to stem the spread of COVID-19."

by Pamela Palmater <https://aptnnews.ca/2020/03/23/covid-19-pandemic-plan-needed-for-canadas-jails-and-prisons>

“Contain COVID, Not People: Advancing prison abolition during the public health crisis” March 26 webinar video features Syrus Marcus-Ware (Black Lives Matter-Toronto), El Jones (East Coast Prison Justice), Lindsay Jennings (Prisoners with HIV/AIDS Support Action Network-PASAN), Souheil Benslimane (Criminalization and Punishment Education Project), and Dean Spade. Organized by Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy - CSSDP Ryerson, Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project, Criminalization and Punishment Education Project, and PASAN. <https://facebook.com/CSSDPRyerson/videos/691115248363665>

Black Lives Matter-Toronto 76 Geary Ave., Toronto, ON M6H 2B5 info@blacklivesmatter.ca, https://blacklivesmatter.ca	PASAN, 526 Richmond Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3 (416) 920-9567, fax 416 920-4314 http://pasan.org
CSSDP Ryerson 350 Victoria St., Toronto, ON M5B 2K3 cssdp@ryerson.ca, https://harmreductionto.ca	Dean Spade, Associate Professor, Seattle Law School, 901 12th Avenue, P.O. Box 222000, Seattle, WA USA 98122-1090 https://deanspade.net

“From Burnside to Laval: Solidarity!” “We join the Laval strikers in their cull for release. We salute your courage and wish you strength.

“Free the Laval Strikers! Solidarity with all prisoners across the world!”

<https://kersplebedeb.com/posts/from-burnside-to-laval-solidarity>

“Coast to coast support for migrant detainees on hunger strike in Quebec due to risks of COVID-19 #HungerStrikeLaval”

“Medical professionals, human rights organizers, and supporters from coast to coast came together virtually to denounce the catastrophic legal, medical, and moral consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on incarcerated migrants.”

“ ‘La Ligue des droits et libertés is more and more concerned both for the health and safety of the detainees at the Laval Immigration Detention Centre, and for public health. To avoid a public health disaster, they must be released and we must prevent others from being detained’, said Alexandra Pierre”

<https://nsadvocate.org/2020/03/28/press-release-coast-to-coast-support-for-migrant-detainees-on-hunger-strike-in-quebec-due-to-risks-of-covid-19-hungerstrikelaval>

La Ligue des droits et libertés, 469, Jean-Talon Ouest, bureau 105, Montréal, QC H3N 1R4, (514) 849-7717, info@liguedesdroits.ca, <https://liguedesdroits.ca>

Former refugee detainee on Laval Hunger Strike

Stefan [Christoff, Free City Radio]: *Thank you for speaking so late Mohamed. So right now [March 31] at the Laval detention centre, there is a hunger strike going on, you have spent a lot of time at Laval centre, both as a refugee claimant, but also doing visits and trying to support people who are detained. So I really wanted to hear how you are feeling about the hunger strike taking place ...*

Mohamed [Barry, Statut pour les guinéens]: I feel very angry, I don't see why people are detained there right now. Why are they being held and not released by the government?

There is a high chance for people to get COVID-19 there. At the centre they keep people in the same rooms, the same areas, people can't stay apart in a safe way, because the centre is often crowded, I know this personally.

Stefan: *Also there are families and people of different generations detained there, right?*

Mohamed: Yes, some elderly people and also some families. It is very sad, they all need to be free.

Stefan: *What do you want to say to the Canadian government about this?*

Mohamed: I want to say that all the people in Laval need to be released immediately. I feel really sad that people were forced to do to a hunger strike to call for their rights and health to be respected. I feel sad about the detention situation, but I am encouraging the strikers to continue until they are released. They must release them, because their detention doesn't respect human rights, also it is not safe for the detained people, so it is not safe for all of the society.

Stefan: *Also people are jailed at the Laval centre for no crime, just for being immigrants, for being refugees.*

Mohamed: Actually it is a crime from the Canadian government to keep these immigrants and refugees locked in prison.

Yes, the government cut the outside visits, but that's all they have really done to address the situation, the COVID-19, but the situation isn't safe, the crowded situation in the centre, they must be released.

Stefan: *So this is a violation of human rights by the Canadian government?*

Mohamed: Yes, the government is denying the human rights and safety of the people at Laval centre.

Stefan: *Are you speaking with anyone in the centre Laval?*

Mohamed: I have gotten voice mails about this, it is very moving. I am very sad about their situation, they must be released.

<https://freecityradio.org/post/614149302725541888/mohammed-barry-on-lavalhungerstrike-during>

Free City Radio, CKUT, 3647 University Street, Montréal, QC H3A 2B3

<https://ckut.ca/en/content/free-city-radio>

Statut pour les guinéens 514 342-2111 <https://facebook.com/statutpourlesguineens>

“Four Reasons to Keep Allowing Refugees into Canada: Why shutting out asylum seekers is wrong and won’t make us safer” by Paula Ethans

“Starting this Wednesday [March 25], asylum seekers who cross the border at unofficial ports of entry — known as irregular migrants — will be arrested and handed over to American authorities.”

“...This policy is ineffective, immoral and likely illegal.”

“This is a marked departure from the government’s previous position. Just a day earlier, the government promised that it would continue to allow people to cross into Canada, ensuring they screen and isolate anyone who crossed the border for two weeks in federal facilities.”

<https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2020/03/23/Shutting-Out-Refugees-Wrong-Wont-Make-Us-Safer>

“We can’t police our way out of a pandemic” by Alexander McClelland

“We might think COVID-19 impacts everyone equally. But laws designed to punish people in the pandemic will not be applied equally. Police will target marginalized communities. Just look to the numerous police killings of people of colour, homeless people and people with mental health issues.

“To learn lessons from the harms of criminalizing HIV, a global statement by international experts from HIV Justice Worldwide, released on March 25, calls for policymakers to avoid the temptation to use criminal law or other ineffective and disproportionate repressive measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

“An effective response to COVID-19 must ensure that people who are most marginalized in society are able to access the means to practise public health protocols. This means ensuring as a society that people have a home to “stay home” in, and that information, education and support is accessible and helps make physical distancing possible for a wide diversity of people.

“Widespread social and economic reforms are urgently needed. Homeless people need places to stay immediately. Any government enacting a state of emergency must enable the financial and social support of those who are most vulnerable to follow protocols. Instead of policing, we need testing.

“The people who will have the hardest time practising physical distancing lack financial means or may have mental health, language, coherence or ability issues. Fines will do no good. And what will we do when people can’t pay the fines? Put them in jails – which are hotbeds of communicable disease? In certain areas, prisoners are being released due to COVID-19 fears. Putting more people in prison will not end COVID-19.” <https://nowtoronto.com/news/coronavirus-we-cant-police-our-way-out-of-pandemic>

Canadian Coalition to Reform HIV Criminalization <https://facebook.com/hivcrim>

“With NWDC a ‘Tinderbox’ for COVID-19 Outbreak, Detained People Begin Mass Hunger Strike to Highlight Their Plight, 80+ People Refuse all Food amidst Coronavirus exposure fears

“Tacoma, WA - On Friday, March 27, 2020, thirty people caged at the infamous and medically negligent Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) began a hunger strike to call attention to their suffering and plight. Coronavirus infections and rates of death from COVID-19 continue to soar in Western Washington. Members of a single unit -- called a pod by NWDC --began their hunger strike soon after a peer with COVID-19-like symptoms was seen vomiting while GEO guards removed him. (GEO Group is the private for-profit company that owns and runs this facility.) When those in the pod inquired about the individual's condition and whether he tested positive for the Coronavirus, GEO guards refused to answer. Only later did guards inform people that the person from their pod is now in a Tacoma-area hospital receiving intensive medical care.

“Wracked with debilitating anxiety and fear that every day inside NWDC places their lives in danger, people detained have been forced to go on hunger strike to call attention to their inhumane treatment and the callousness of GEO and its employees during this pandemic. As one hunger striker who reached out to La Resistencia said, "We don't want to die. We are humans, not animals.

“Hunger strikers vow to continue until ICE and GEO respond to their demands. Speaking to Mora-Villalpando by phone, they explained the urgency, ‘We want to be released because in here there's no protection from the virus...We are on hunger strike because we know it's not true that we will receive medical care here in NWDC. In our unit there are eighty people, at least seventy-five of us are on hunger strike today [Saturday, March 28, 2020]. Two other units have joined us with twenty to fifty people also on hunger strike.’ The strike is indefinite, continuing until the following demands are met: 1) Provide humanitarian temporary visa for those inside; 2) Reunite those detained with their families; 3) Stop all deportation and immigration proceedings until the pandemic has concluded.

“With brutal mistreatment and blatant disregard for hygiene or the sanitary conditions needed to stop the rampant spread of the virus among guards, staff, and those detained within the facility, more people in adjacent pods have joined the strike. As of March 28, a minimum of eighty people crowded in multiple pods across the 1,575-bed facility joined the hunger strike. With every passing hour, more people detained inside NWDC are learning of the strike and joining in.

“Friday [March 27] was only the most recent instance that those caged inside NWDC could have been exposed to the highly contagious and novel Coronavirus, with many others showing similar symptoms. Other people are sequestered in medical isolation in the NWDC, and people detained do not know if they have been tested for Covid-19. The facility is notorious for contagious outbreaks of mumps and varicella in the last three years.

“Doctors from the US Department of Homeland Security described immigrant detention centers like the NWDC as ‘tinderboxes’ that spark a terrible and rapid spread of the disease amongst people detained, guards, and the broader community. Undocumented advocate Maru Mora-Villalpando supports those hungering for their justice: ‘Speaking with family members of those detained inside, their hearts, like ours, are crushed that loved ones must risk hungering without end to draw attention to the unimaginable experiences those inside endure, including now being forced to await their infection from an incurable virus that is entirely preventable.’

“Hunger strikers already report that NWDC guards have threatened them, and others have detailed attempts by GEO employees to suppress any knowledge of the strike and especially of the escalating health crisis inside. The daughter of one hunger-striker, scheduled to graduate as a school teacher this June, describes her father's plight, ‘My dad has been detained for over seven months. He had a medical procedure recently and his immune system is weak. He's afraid of what could happen. He calls us every day and says if I don't call you one day, it is because something happened to me. He told us two people tried to call the radio stations yesterday to announce the strike, and guards revoked their communications privileges.’ ICE’s lack of transparency and communication endangers people detained, traumatizes loved ones, and places all of our health at risk.

“According to the Detention Watch Network, there are at least five other hunger strikes by detained people across the United States. Expressing their solidarity, one hunger striker put it this way: ‘I want to say to everyone else that they are not alone, you have all of us here, and we are not going to break... that we are with them, we are all in agreement on not eating. That we are united...they should ask their families to support us, that they speak up, that they should scream. We have a voice and a vote; we are not alone. We are united, united creating a single chain, this is a message to not give up. That more people join us every day, together we can achieve this. If someone breaks, the entire chain breaks. Come together, join us, you are not alone, we are united.’

“La Resistencia stands with today's hunger strikers and their demands. We call for ICE to immediately release all those who have been forced to risk their own welfare to reveal the conditions inside this abysmal facility to demand their freedom and a stoppage of all deportations and transfers in and out of the state.

“La Resistencia (formerly known as NWDC Resistance) is a volunteer community group that emerged to fight deportations in 2014 at the now-infamous Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, WA. La Resistencia supports people detained in demanding an end to all detentions and deportations while bettering treatment and conditions.”
<http://laresistencianw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Hunger-Strike-Press-Release.pdf>
resistenciasolidarity@gmail.com



COVID-19 FEDERAL PRISON MEASURES



5 DEMANDS:

IMMEDIATELY RELEASE ALL VULNERABLE PRISONERS



Anyone over 50 years old, immunocompromised, pregnant, sick, or who has a preexisting condition that makes them at high risk of dying from COVID-19

RELEASE ALL PRISONERS, STARTING WITH THOSE IN MINIMUM SECURITY PRISONS AND HALFWAY HOUSES



According to Correctional Service Canada's own logic, those in minimum security prisons and halfway houses are considered the lowest risk to public safety, so start there. Let those with homes go home, provide safe physical distancing in halfway houses where people choose to remain, widen access to Canada Emergency Response Benefit funding to include people getting out of prison, open up vacant housing for those with no homes.

TAKE IMMEDIATE SANITARY AND PREVENTATIVE ACTION TO PROTECT THOSE WHO REMAIN IMPRISONED:



Provide soap, hand sanitizer with proper alcohol content as recommended by WHO, bleach, cleaning supplies, and self assessment tools (like thermometers) to every prisoner at no cost, transfer prisoners in maximum and medium security into the empty minimums to allow for proper physical distancing.

NO MORE PUNISHMENT. PRIORITIZE CONTINUED ACCESS TO COMMUNITY AND FAMILY FOR THOSE WHO REMAIN IMPRISONED



Free phone calls and video visitation, allow phone calls and video visitation for volunteers and non-family supports, access to cell phones to limit use of communal phones and so that access to the outside continues if medical isolation happens, no lockdowns to inhibit access to community and family supports

MEDICAL SERVICES FOR ALL



Ensure medical services are fully funded, accessible 24/7, and extra testing. Waive the need for guards to accompany prisoners to the hospital. No sending prisoners to special military hospitals.

“Prison Strikes” in “Covid-19 Strike Document”

Prisoners at **Rikers** Island in New York City protested and went on strike March 21-22 for “immediate action for inmates’ health after one inmate began exhibiting flu-like symptoms.

“Inmates received some cleaning supplies, masks, and screenings from their action, but are now asking for the release of prisoners over the age of 50, with health problems, with less than a year remaining, and parole violations.

“Mayor Bill DeBlasio has said the city will release nearly 400 people from jails to stop the spread of COVID-19.”

Prisoners at **Etowah** County Detention Centre in Alabama succeeded March 20 in the transfer of “sick detainees...to a different unit.” It's Time To #ShutDownEtowah

<http://shutdownetowah.org>

Around 60 migrant detainees at the **South Texas ICE Processing Center** took strike action to demand that “all inmates be screened for COVID-19

“ICE [US Immigration Control and Enforcement] has removed news access at the facility. It is unclear if the demands have been met.” People also acted in late March against detention conditions and for detainees’ release at four other facilities in New Jersey and Georgia.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZV_AkDIPHW7iYqQouldfpEZsZ9w9zD_Ir3Q6YB9LkT8

Perilous: A chronicle of prisoner unrest across the US and Canada, 2010-present,
info@perilouschronicle.com, <https://perilouschronicle.com>

“a **lockdown** is precisely what the [US] **federal Bureau of Prisons** imposed on April 1st, confining all 176,000 federal prisoners to their cells for at least two weeks.”

https://democracynow.org/2020/4/2/cruel_and_unusual_punishment_the_us

Nigeria: 40+ organizations demand “Most prisoners should be released”

A statement endorsed by over 40 organizations in Nigeria, “Trade Union and Civil Society Pressure Needed to Protect the Poor Majority”, includes the demand -

“Most prisoners should be released. All the cases that have been delayed must be hurriedly addressed. All prisoners on remand before their trial to be released – they are innocent until proved guilty.” by Andy Wynne in comment

<https://roape.net/2020/03/26/out-of-control-crisis-covid-19-and-capitalism-in-africa>

“All Prisoners Are Political Prisoners: Rethinking the Campaign to #FreeThemAll Beyond Borders and Beyond COVID-19” by Golnar Nikpour

“Prison protests in Iran and beyond reveal a macabre truth about our heavily incarcerated contemporary world: inhabitants of the world’s modern prisons, detention centers, and refugee camps are uniquely vulnerable to infectious outbreaks.”

“none of the governmental responses to COVID-19 to date have seriously addressed the underlying public health quandary of the prison as an institution: modern prisons, and other carceral sites like refugee or internment camps, are as a rule spaces conducive to infectious outbreaks with lethal consequences both for those incarcerated and for the public-at-large. In other words, when it comes to prisons and public health, COVID-19 isn’t the crisis; prisons are the crisis.”

<https://jadaliyya.com/Details/40865>

Open Letter: CONTAIN COVID-19, NOT PEOPLE

As all levels of government call on people to prioritize health, protocols to protect the health of people who remain imprisoned have been insufficient. **As people and organizations dedicated to supporting individuals who are imprisoned and their communities, we are concerned about the lack of protocols to protect and prioritize the health of those who remain behind bars. People should be released to the extent possible. We demand a response to COVID-19 that leaves no one behind and centres those most impacted.** Due to existing unsanitary conditions, close quarters, frequent physical contact, and the underlying chronic health conditions of many detained people - jails, prisons, immigration detention centers, juvenile detention facilities, and courthouses pose specific challenges that threaten the health and wellbeing of our communities. To combat the spread of COVID-19 and prioritize everyone's health, we must adopt an approach that centres the needs of criminalized people and those made vulnerable to the virus by social inequality.

I. Take immediate action to reduce the number of people in prison, jails, and detention centers:

- **Release all youth** to the care of family and community.
- **Release from prison and jails individuals who will become particularly vulnerable should they contract COVID-19** - including people who are over 50, pregnant or immunocompromised.
- **Extend the temporary absence program and release people in pretrial detention** who are legally innocent and those serving sentences who are not considered an immediate danger to the community- including (but not limited to) those waiting on sureties, probation violation hearings, or parole revocation proceedings.
- **Release all immigrants and refugees** from jails and immigration detention centers. Do not conduct immigration enforcement operations, especially in or around shelters, hospitals, or medical clinics.
- **Suspend arrests, prosecutions, and pre-trial detention** for all non-violent charges. Allocate resources for community-based transformative justice responses.

II. Take immediate action to protect those who remain imprisoned:

- **Provide soap, hand sanitizer, bleach, and cleaning supplies to every prisoner at no cost.** Ensure that those who are arrested are held in locations where they do not share toilets, soap, utensils, or bedding.
- **Solitary confinement should not be relied on for health and safety.** Increase access to fresh airspaces with safe social distancing for anyone who is detained.
- **In the absence of visitations, all phone calls and other forms of contact should be free.** Restrictions on calls to cell-phones and switchboards should be lifted immediately.
- **Ensure medical programs are fully funded, accessible, and staffed.** Provide training, protective gear, and regular testing for incarcerated persons and staff in the facilities. Ensure the availability of medications and treatments.

III. Take immediate actions for the health of the poor, precarious workers & the criminalized

IV. Take immediate actions for the health of the region's unhoused population

**Prison Justice Network c/o Michael Ma, Criminology Department,
Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 12666 72nd Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 2M8**

Signed Individuals (773); Signed Organizations (47, including Prison Justice Network):

Bar None Winnipeg [Bar None, c/o 231 Isabel Street, Winnipeg, MB R3A 1H2, <https://barnonewpg.org>]
Black Lives Matter – Toronto [76 Geary Avenue, Toronto, ON M6H 2B5 <https://blacklivesmatter.ca>]
Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies [190 Bronson Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H4]
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network [1240 Bay Street, Suite 600, Toronto, ON M5R 2A7, <http://aidslaw.ca>]
Canadian Prison Law Association [211 Division Street, Kingston, Ontario K7K 3Z2 canadianprisonlaw.ca]
Carceral Studies Research Collective [120 University Private, Soc Sc Bldg, Rm 14002, Ottawa K1N 6N5]
Climate Justice Edmonton [climatejusticeedmonton@gmail.com, <https://climatejusticeedmonton.com>]
Climate Justice Montreal [justiceclimatiquemtl@gmail.com, <http://climatejusticemontreal.ca>]
Climate Justice Toronto [climatejusticeto.on@gmail.com, <https://fb.me/climatejusticeto>]
Criminalization and Punishment Education Project [same as Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, below]
Decent Work and Health Network [<https://decentworkandhealth.org>]
East Coast Prison Justice Society [eastcoastprisonjustice@gmail.com, <https://fb.me/ECPJS>]
Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba, E. Fry Society of Peterborough, Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto
Empowerment Council: A Voice for the Clients of CAMH [33 Russell St, Rm 2008, Toronto, ON M5S 2S1]
First Grace Community Alliance
Foundation for Liberating Minds [<https://foundationforliberatingminds.org>]
IGNITE Global Feminist Collective [ignitefeminismnow@gmail.com, <https://ignitefeminism.com>]
Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee [PO Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA, iwoc@iww.org]
Independent Jewish Voices [PO Box 75372, Leslie Street PO, Toronto, ON M4M 1B0 ijvcanada.org]
International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network – Canada [canada@ijsn.net, <http://ijan.org/tag/canada>]
Jail Accountability & Information Line [Criminalization and Punishment Education Project cp-ep.org]
Journal of Prisoners on Prisons [c/o Justin Piché, Criminology Dept, U of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5]
Joint Effort [PO Box 78005, 1755 East Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5N 5W1 prisonjustice.ca/joint-effort]
Law Union of Ontario [31 Prince Arthur Ave, Toronto ON M5R 1B2 <http://lawunion.ca>]
Legal Aid for All [info.legalaidforall@gmail.com, <https://legalaidforall.net>]
Mashed Economies Artist Collective [info@mashedeconomies.com, <http://mashedeconomies.org>]
Millennial Womxn in Policy [fb.me/Millennial-Womxn-in-Policy-Public-Affairs-410194496400131]
Millennium for All – Winnipeg [<https://fb.me/Millennium-for-All-2300719336921543>]
Movement Defense Committee [Law Union of Ontario <https://movementdefence.org>]
No More Silence [nomoresilenceorg@gmail.com, <https://nomoresilence-nomoresilence.blogspot.com>]
No One is Illegal [260 Queen Street West, PO Box 60006, Toronto, ON M5V 1Z8 nooneisillegal.org]
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty [157 Carlton Street, Unit 201, Toronto, ON. M5A 2K3 <https://ocap.ca>]
Ottawa Sanctuary City Network [ottawasanctuarycitynetwork@gmail.com, ottawasanctuarycity.ca]
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre [1229 Queen Street West, Toronto, ON M6K 1L2]
PASAN - Prisoners with HIV/AIDS Support Action Network [526 Richmond St E, Toronto, ON M5A 1R3]
Prisoners' Legal Services in BC [302-7818 6th Street, Burnaby, BC V3N 4N8 <https://prisonjustice.org>]
Red Braid Alliance for Decolonial Socialism [10679 King George Blvd, Surrey, BC, V3T 2X6 redbraid.org]
Ryerson Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy [350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2K3]
Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition [<http://sexworkwinnipeg.com>]
Showing Up for Racial Justice Toronto [surjto@gmail.com, <https://surjtoronto.com>]
Toronto Harm Reduction Alliance [thralliance@gmail.com, <https://torontoharmreductionalliance.ca>]
Toronto Urban Native Ministry [6 Trinity Square, Toronto, ON M5G 1B1 fb.me/urbannativeministry]
Winnipeg Police Cause Harm [<https://fb.me/wpgpoliceharm> <https://twitter.com/WpgPoliceHarm>]
Women's Wellness Within [PO Box 34007 Scotia Square, Halifax, NS B3J 3S1 womenswellnesswithin.org]

**Prison Justice Network c/o Michael Ma, Criminology Department,
Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 12666 72nd Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 2M8**

as we publish this (April 4), we notice people incarcerated in **Mission** prison “are in self-isolation” after two people tested positive for covid19 and all prisoners in Mission **medium** security’s 216-bed facility are on “**lockdown**”.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6779699/coronavirus-mission-institution-cases>

<https://cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/correctional-service-of-canada-says-2-inmates-in-mission-have-covid-19-1.5522366>



image: Zola_mtl street art <https://instagram.com/p/B-gTXYcnxUf>

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