

Mass Hunger Strike by California Prisoners continues despite Retaliation by Authorities

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“Understand that ... people are dying who could be saved, that generations more will die or live poor butchered half-lives if you fail to act.”. [George L. Jackson](#), former Black Panther activist – shot to death by prison wardens on August 21, 1971.

The mass hunger strike by prisoners in California’s jails has run into its third week. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has [refused](#) to negotiate or address the strikers’ [five main demands](#). Prison officials have shown no interest in negotiating an end to the mass hunger strike despite the obvious dangers to the prisoners health.

“This is a clear attack against a non-violent protest,” says Anne Weills, attorney for several hunger strikers. “It is pathetic that in response to prisoners’ calls for basic human and civil rights, the CDCR responds by violating those rights.”

Instead, prison officials have tried to break the mass hunger strike by moving prisoners’ representatives from Secure Housing Units at Pelican Bay State Prison to Administrative Segregation, blasting cold air into cells leaving some of the men sick and freezing and confiscating legal documents from hunger strikers. The callous inhumanity of prison officials has led them to deny hunger strikers medical attention and banning lawyers such as Marilyn McMahan from visiting the hunger strikers.

“This is a matter of life and death for both the strikers and their families,” said mediator

[Barbara Becnel](#). "We object in the strongest possible terms to the complacency of the CDCR."

Jeffrey Beard Secretary of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has refused to meet with mediators working on behalf of the hunger strikers. Meanwhile California Governor Jerry Brown refuses to intervene in the unfolding crisis and is off touring Europe. Ironically enough one of his tour dates is a visit to the Concentration camp at Dachau in Germany where thousands were tortured by Nazi prison authorities.

Not surprisingly, families and loved ones of the hunger strikers are outraged by this callous indifference to the fate of thousands of men.

The hunger strikers at Pelican Bay State Prison who have been placed in Administrative Segregation are reportedly in high spirits and showing great resolve in the face of attempts to break them. On Day 17 of the mass hunger strike they released the following statement:

"Greetings of solidarity and respect to all of our supporters, all people of conscience around the world, and all similarly situated prisoners. You should know that once again our peaceful protest is making history, bringing international attention to our collective efforts to bring an end, once and for all, to the inhumane conditions and torture of indefinite solitary confinement.

We are being tortured each day by state officials (Governor Brown, his appointee CDCR Secretary Beard, and all his underlings). Increased retaliation has been perpetuated upon defenceless and starving prisoners who only seek what any human being strives for—humane treatment, dignity, equality, and justice for our families, loved ones, and ourselves. These are the fundamental rights of all people, including those incarcerated by the state. We are doing all we can, together with our outside supporters, to bring about a positive changes. Gov. Brown is not above the will of the people of California, and if he refuses to recognize the legitimacy of our human and civil rights struggle against the practices of this prison system, then it is the responsibility of the federal government and President Obama to use their powers to stop the harm being done to thousands of prisoners being held in solitary confinement.

CDCR officials are attempting to undermine the voluntary actions of prisoners who truly want better treatment and living conditions by wrongfully accusing us of forcing tens-of-thousands of prisoners across California, along with our supporters in the free world, to participate in our protest. Prisoners across the state are participating because of the inhumane conditions they are being subjected to. As HUMAN BEINGS prisoners are

collectively resisting such treatment, and they are doing so peacefully. The attempted repression of our protest has not broken our spirits. In fact it has only helped to strengthen each of us—individually and collectively. Despite CDCR’s retaliations and propaganda, we remain steadfast in our commitment. We will see our peaceful hunger strike through to victory, even if this requires us to endure the torture of force-feeding. We believe at this point in our struggle we are prepared to do what is necessary in order for Gov. Brown and the CDCR to realize how serious we are, and how far and long we are willing to go to have our reasonable demands implemented.

We are hopeful that all those brave men and women across the state who are participating in this strike—all who are able health-wise—will be encouraged to issue public statements of their own, via media outlets across the country, letting the world know why they have taken part in this historic, collective struggle.

In closing, we want to inform the world that this hunger strike is far from over. We are in it for the long haul. Thus, we strongly urge Gov. Brown to return from his “get-away” vacation overseas and deal urgently with this crisis before more prisoners suffer serious health damage or death. If any deaths do occur, the responsibility for them will fall squarely on Brown and the CDCR in their callousness and inaction.

We believe that we will prevail.

In Solidarity,

PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Representatives

- Todd Asher, C-58191, PBSP-SHU, D4-121
- Arturo Castellanos, C-17275, PBSP-SHU, D1-121
- Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa (Dewberry), C-35671, PBSP-SHU, D1-117
- Antonio Guillen, P-81948, PBSP-SHU, D2-106

Ordinary people across the world can help stop the torture by telling the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to return the 14 prisoner representatives at Pelican Bay State Prison to their cells and return their confiscated legal documents and lift the ban on their lawyer Marilyn McMahon, so that she can visit her clients.

American capitalism spends tens of billions of dollars locking up its poorest citizens. Nearly 2 million Americans are incarcerated in prison as part of an attempt to divide the population and prevent young people in particular from fighting back against massive social and economic inequality. This historic mass hunger strike shows how resistance to a barbaric and inhumane society is possible against overwhelming odds.

You can support the hunger strikers by signing the petition to Governor Jerry Brown

http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/51040/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=11455

or visit the website of the Prison Hunger Strike Solidarity Campaign.

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