

Continental Conference Call #2 to Support the CA Hunger Strike: July 26th, 2011

Welcome!

Reminders:

- Not a private call
- Email or text for questions
- Participants will be muted after first few minutes so we can get through the agenda. Presenters have already been selected to speak to each area of the agenda
- Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition is not the central committee to organize around this, rather continuing to serve as a vehicle for communication & information. Suggestions of what people should do can be helpful, and this call is also set up primarily to help people figure out what work is needed, so that people not in the coalition and outside CA can take it up themselves with their networks in multiple locations.

Update on Strikes

Pelican Bay:

- Prisoners began eating around the 20th after accepting an offer from CDCR
- Choice between continuous torture or death. Wanted to maintain the struggle without dying.
- The strike leaders framed the work so far as being victorious, b/c of the attention on the torture going on at Pelican Bay and other prisons.
- The leaders place a lot of trust in outside supporters to continue the fight for all of the demands to be effectively met.
- They referred to the strike as the first quarter of a long struggle.
- The other victory is that high-level of organizing for over 6,600 people across the state to join the strike for four weeks.
- Now prisoners are having some difficulty transitioning back to eating.
- We weren't able to make the CDCR admit that they are torturing people. We didn't get national figures stepping up to the plate to drive it home. How do we focus the attention and get recognizable public figure heads to get involved and stay involved? We can and should still do this, and can use the Legislative Hearing on August 23rd to do this.

Calipatria:

- Holds 2,000-3,000 maximum security prisoners on the borders of Arizona, CA and Mexico
- Majority of the Black and Latino prisoners joined the hunger strike for at least the first week (at least 2,000), and then after the guards began to announce the strike was over to break it in the first week. Prisoners in Administrative Segregation continued (about 300 prisoners) in the fourth week and are transitioning to eating again now.
- Heat down south is around 110 degrees, hotter in concrete cells

- Prisoners joined the hunger strike to highlight the connections btwn Pelican Bay conditions and Calipatria, specifically around false gang validation, and group punishment, solitary confinement, and wanting an end to long-term SHU hold used prior to transferring prisoners to PB, Corcoran, & Tehachapi.
- Joined the strike in hopes to change their own conditions.
- Reports from family members and prisoners that 2 people died but the CDCR is saying that they are unrelated to the hunger strike. There isn't more confirmation on this.
- For people outside of CA, it's important to know PB is farthest northwest on Oregon/CA border and Calipatria is farthest south on southeast border, about 1500 miles apart from each other. Conditions are similar across CA's system.

Corcoran:

- Prison Moratorium Project and a group of central valley families are working w/ families members, doing outreach before and outside of weekend visits for Corcoran about the strike.
- Initial confirmation was that the strike was in solidarity with Pelican Bay, but now there are talks that prisoners are continuing the strike to change their own conditions at Corcoran.
- PMP and other orgs won't be out there again until next Saturday. Will have more confirmation after that.

Organizations affiliated with the coalition have been doing mass-mailings to at least 1,000 prisoners with weekly updates in efforts of circulating more trust-worthy information. So some info outside of the CDCR is getting to people inside, *if* CDCR lets it through.

Update on CDCR Offer & Mediations:

- As reported on the first conference call, mediation team spoke with hunger strike leaders when the CDCR made an offer to the hunger strike leaders two weeks ago. The offer was not substantial enough, and so the prisoners rejected the offer
- On Monday July 18th, 17 Pelican Bay prisoner, including 3 of the 11 leaders s were shipped to Corcoran due to "health concerns" and overcrowding at PB infirmary.
- rumors of a better offer being made started to circulating last week. CDCR tried to split the mediation team from the prisoners and denied more group calls btwn mediators and leaders.
- Wed afternoon (7/ 20) the leaders and the CDCR reached an agreement:
- A Statement from the four leaders explaining they reasoning behind the leaders decision was written and sent to the legal team. They explained the agreement in many ways as a victory, including sitting across the table from CDCR figure heads saying they would make effective change to restructure the system, after the CDCR refused to negotiate all this time. The leaders

collectively decided to end hunger strike due to CDCR's good faith gesture, and continue the pressure through outside supporters. While the hunger strike is over, the struggle is just beginning. This statement is available on the website here.

- Counting on all outside supporters to continue this struggle.
- Mediation can't be happening without grassroots organizing happening. If the prisoners are going to have their demands met, it's about what people do outside that will determine whether this will happen.

Messaging Going Forward:

- The overall messaging of people needing to support the prisoners in winning their demands does not need to change. Support and solidarity can still be framed within people building pressure to win these demands and exposing the brutal and torturous conditions of imprisonment.
- Additional messaging supporters can add include highlighting the momentousness of what has happened so far (for a list of some gains, click here)—that prisoners effectively organized more than 6,600 prisoners to carry on a hunger strike that lasted for four weeks, to expose torturous conditions, while being held in extreme isolation, in these brutal conditions.
- The conditions the hunger strike worked to expose, and effectively exposed, still need to be changed, and so it is now up to outside supporters to continue the work, and to match the courage of the hunger strikers in making sure these demands are won.

Q&A (email or text questions read and responded to on the call)

1. What facilities are people still striking? And how many prisoners?

-Corcoran prisoners has their own specific issues. In the process of following up with families to get more info on that. Getting more confirmation. Need for more clarity around what the specifics are.

2. Are there plans to reach out to people in Corcoran?

-still doing visits at Pelican Bay. Not sure about expanding to Corcoran. We just got names of hunger strikers recently, and it takes a few weeks for legal clearance.

3. What are the details of the agreement & is there any document available?

- the CDCR agreed to providing cold weather caps, wall calendars and some educational opportunities, specifically proctored exams for correspondence courses. The CDCR also offered a gesture of good faith in promising to look into making more substantial changes specifically in regards to gang validation and debriefing policies.
- The prisoners explained that it was not these concessions that are victorious, but the wide-scale attention drawn in to exposing torturous conditions and the international show of people power across prison

walls that pressured CDCR to even meet at the same table as the hunger strike leaders and offer a “deal.” It’s this pressure they are saying we need to keep up.

- There is a document, and it will be released as soon as possible.

Actions/Events

- Actions & Events have been happening still and still need to happen.
- There was an event in Chicago outside the state building this past week, a demo outside the jail in Greensboro in NC, another mobilization to Sacramento outside CDCR headquarters, events in LA, Chino, San Diego
- Redwood Curtain Copwatch and Bar None are giving logistical support for people doing visits at Pelican Bay.

Events In Progress:

- Demo outside Raleigh Jail this Sunday in NC. Visit: prisonbooks.info, there’s also making a map of all solidarity actions around the world.
- Los Angeles: Rally on Thursday at Regan building 300 Spring St. 9-5 march to the jail from 7-10.
- Oakland Weekly Vigil continuing. Supporters in other places are also encouraged to keep doing weekly events, or a similar weekly event, focusing on more building community power and awareness of the strike and conditions.

Legislative Hearing on Conditions of Pelican Bay on August 23rd:

- Tom Ammiano (chair of Assembly Public Safety Committee) holding hearings with witnesses on both sides—four panel topics: gang validation & how people get placed in the SHU, conditions of the SHU, Debriefing & how/if people get out; and some suggestions the CDCR could do differently—and there’s a public comment period.
- Prisoners from Pelican Bay to tele-conference into the hearing.
- And have letters read or submitted into the record.
- Need to have a lot of people to show up.
- Huge opportunity to further winning the demands, and an opportunity to build up out-of-state pressure and grassroots power

(Inter)National Days of Action

- A number of supporters have been asking the coalition about a national day of action, specifically to better coordinate out-of-state support
- NYC
 - Folks in NY are trying to move forward and arrange a national day of action. They’ve been focusing on how to take media action. Having difficulty turning out enough folks and focusing on a sustained campaign in NY so people in NYC might feel a stronger urge to be in solidarity.

- Getting a sense from this call that national days of action should correspond to the hearing.
- Potentially highlight the Attica events coming up (celebrating the 40th anniversary of Attica), prisoners taking the lead in a movement that's heating up again. To see this as a continued struggle.
- World Can't Wait Call for National Day of Action
 - World Can't Wait presented idea of National Day of Action for August 1st (this coming Monday).
- How to consolidate the activity that has been happening across the country and bring family members out on one specific day, close to the hearing. No mechanism for planning that right now.
- The legislative hearings on August 23rd are a very good target to build up towards, both with lead-up events and national events during.
- We need to keep building momentum to make the hearing on the 23rd very impactful.

Wrap Up/closing Asks:

- Based on this call, more consolidation of different efforts is needed, as well as network connecting and making contact with each other.
- If you do have contacts of well-known artists, politicians, leaders, etc who could bring more attention to this issue, let PHSS know. We can try to find someone who can bottom line collecting this information
- If you're interested in being on a smaller more private call to focus in on strategizing, email prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity@gmail.com and let the coalition know
- If you would like to be connected with people who are organizing more cross-geography coordinated days of action, please contact us know and we'll get you connected: prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity@gmail.com