

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/1013-faith-leaders-human-rights-advocates-families-of-prisoners-to-meet-with-california-prison-officials>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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CONTACTS:

American Friends Service Committee: Laura Magnani (510) 684-7254

California Families Against Solitary Confinement: Dolores Canales (714) 290-9077

National Religious Campaign Against Torture: Samantha Friedman, Samantha@westendstrategy.com, office: (202) 776-7700; cell (202) 215-9260

THURSDAY: Faith Leaders, Human Rights Advocates, Families of Prisoners to Meet With California Prison Officials

Meeting planned as part of Torture Awareness Month advocacy efforts

SACRAMENTO This Thursday, June 26, on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, advocates for inmate rights will convey their concerns about solitary confinement as a form of torture when they meet with Jeffrey Beard, Secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Representatives of California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC) will bring stories of their own and other families whose loved ones have been locked under the torture of solitary confinement -- some of them for decades.

During the hunger strike in California prisons last summer, in which 30,000 inmates participated, Secretary Beard initially promised the meeting after the prisoners go off hunger strike. The meeting was finally scheduled as advocates prepare to observe the one-year anniversary of the historic strike.

Also on Thursday, a delegation of faith leaders will meet with Kathleen Allison, Deputy Director of the Division of Adult Institutions, Facilities Support, at CDCR, whose jurisdiction includes religious affairs.

The delegation will include:

Clergy will echo the family members calls for an end to torture in correctional facilities and will discuss the retaliation prisoners have experienced since participating in the non-violent hunger strike protest.

Media is invited to gather outside CDCR headquarters, 1515 S Street, in Sacramento, at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, June 26, to hear feedback from the meetings as well as advocates hopes and expectations going forward.

The meetings with Beard will take place at 11 a.m. at the CDCR. Faith leaders will pray for the families, the men and women in solitary, correctional staff, and survivors of crime while the families are meeting with Beard. The faith delegation will have their meeting with other CDCR officials at 12 p.m. and will deliver hundreds of prayers cards submitted by people from diverse faith traditions nationwide, to be distributed to incarcerated people who remain in long-term isolation.

Our hope is to stop treating each other as enemies and to open up communication, said Dolores Canales, a founding member of CFASC. As we move toward abolishing this form of torture, we see these meetings as a first step toward finding positive solutions.

Added Laura Magnani, Program Director for Healing Justice, who works out of American Friends Service Committees San Francisco Office, There is no doubt that prolonged solitary isolation constitutes the torture, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment banned by the UN Convention Against Torture.

As faith leaders and representatives of many traditions, we have an ethical obligation to confront anything that degrades or causes suffering in all places and in any circumstances, said Rev. Stief of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. Half of all completed suicides in prison occur in solitary confinement. Further, the use of isolation creates a toxic environment for correctional staff.

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National Religious Campaign Against Torture

PO Box 91820

Washington, DC 20090

(t) 202.547.1920

(f) 202.547.1921

