

Support California Prison Hunger Strikers!

By John Reimann



Early this July, some 30,000 California prisoners went on hunger strike to protest the inhumane conditions in California prisons. Foremost amongst these conditions is solitary confinement, in which a prisoner is kept in solitary for 23.5 hours per day. Some prisoners have been in solitary for decades. This is psychological torture, pure and simple.

Now, reports are coming in from around California. The prisoners on hunger strike are scaring the hell out of the authorities. Not satisfied with using the psychological torture of solitary confinement, the authorities are stepping up the torture and denial of legal rights:

From Pelican Bay State Prison:

“They stopped my [medicine] that I take for my heart condition... The stoppage of my medications is life-threatening and Dr. Sayre is well aware of his actions.”

Reportedly, medical staff at San Quentin were weighing people, making a joke out of the situation, and making bets on how long people would last.

HUNGER STRIKERS AT PELICAN BAY ARE BEING FROZEN

The prisoners who have been moved to Ad-Seg (administrative segregation), as well as prisoners still in SHU (Secure Housing Unit), reported yesterday that it is “freezing cold” in their cells. The prison is pumping in cold air and keeping doors to the outside open. People who are fasting are already cold. SHU prisoners have very thin clothes and thin blankets. [You may recall that their incidental demands back in 2011 were for ‘watch caps’ and for the right to purchase thermal underwear, because of how cold their concrete cells are.] Extreme temperatures are a torture method.

from Corcoran Prison:

One doctor said “Unless you’re dying or seriously bleeding, we can’t do anything for you. Sacramento has ordered us to only provide the most minute of medical care.”

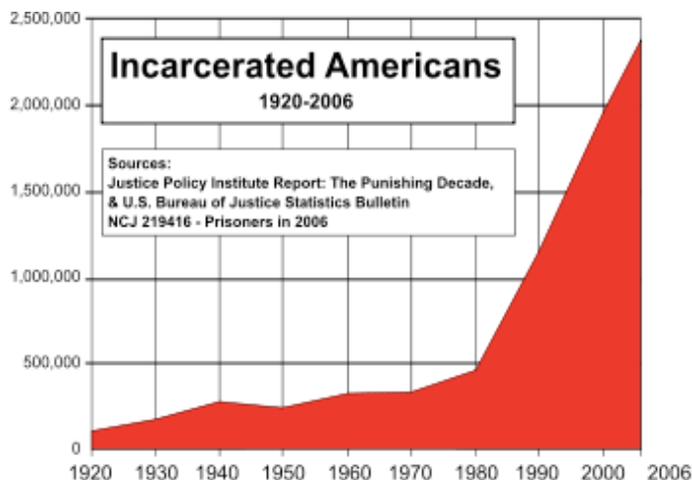
Hunger striker with chronic back pain has taken pain reliever since 2010. Medical staff stopped it abruptly. He writes that this particular medicine “is not supposed to just be stopped. You are supposed to be tapered off. I have been going through lots of pain, sweats, I can’t sleep, etc.” When he asked for his medication, the doctor just laughed at him.

Lawyers for the prisoners have reported that they are being denied access to their clients.

These prisoners have given a lesson to the entire US working class on how to overcome almost all obstacles in organizing. They were able to communicate throughout the vast California prison network. They overcame the severe racial divisions, as leaders of some of the main race-based prison gangs – including the Black Guerrilla Family, the Mexican Mafia and the Aryan Brotherhood – have reportedly participated. The courage they have shown standing up to repression and torture stands as



an example to today's labor union “leaders”, as well as to the labor movement as a whole!



Many people living outside the US find the political thinking here hard to understand. They hear about case after case of somebody taking another's life over the most trivial issues. Or sometimes, as in the case of the Trayvon Martin murder, it's simply due to racism. How is it that the richest nation in the world can have the worst social services of any industrialized country? How is it that the people of the United States accept the government's murder of men women and children overseas through drone warfare, or the permanent torture of human beings locked

up in Guantanamo Bay?

Much of it goes back to how Corporate America responded to the rebellions of the 1960s and '70s. One of the main strategies was to incorporate a policy of mass incarceration, especially of young black men. As well as randomly stopping people – mainly young black men – and searching and arresting them, often for drug possession, new sentencing laws were introduced like California's “3 strikes” law. Under this law, a person who was convicted of two “violent” crimes automatically must get a life sentence for a third felony, including something as minor as shoplifting. Thus it is that with just 5% of the world's population, the US has 25% of the world's prisoners (2.2 million in all).

To get all of this accepted, they had to foster an atmosphere of “blame the victim” and show him or her no mercy; whatever you do, don't look at him or her as a human being. Thus it is that a little child killed in a drone strike in Yemen or Pakistan is just “collateral damage”; a recipient of public welfare is a parasite living off society; a public sector worker is a pampered, greedy worker; and a prisoner organizing the hunger strikes is a “gang leader” and a violent thug.

*These little children were killed by a U.S. drone strike.
According to the values of Corporate America, they
are simply “collateral damage.”*



SANA21-40
N Waziristan:Corpses of innocent children killed in US drone attack on Friday which claims 12 lives in Dande Darpa Khel. (SANA PHOTO)

Those 2.2 million prisoners in the US; they are bearing the brunt of the repression in this country, but they are not alone. One ex prisoner was asked why a worker who is just trying to get by every day and raise a family should care about this. He [explained](#) “You got a choice of the red pill or the blue pill, which means... this here is the real matrix.... You can keep on with that m___f___ rat in the maze, the rat in the wheel. But where you going? What's it all going to land up in? A paycheck? And then what? You're not free.”

In order to fight for their own interests, workers in the United States must also fight for the interests of this layer of society - the most oppressed and exploited of all working class people. And those outside the United States who want to oppose the violence and mayhem that capitalist America visits on them can also do so partly by supporting these brave prisoners who are showing the way for the world-wide rebellion against global capitalism. They can do so by organizing petitions and sending letters of protest, sending e mails, and

making phone calls to California's governor Gerry Brown. ([Here](http://gov.ca.gov/m_contact.php) - http://gov.ca.gov/m_contact.php -is the contact information.) Protests – even as simple as individual delivery of letters and petitions of protest – can be organized at US embassies and consulates around the world.

Everybody involved in running the California prison system, up to Governor Gerry Brown, is guilty of crimes against humanity. The world workers' rebellion against poverty and repression should take note.

Prisoners demands:

- 1) Eliminate group punishment
- 2) Abolish the “Debriefing Policy, and modify “active/inactive” gang status criteria
- 3) Comply with recommendations of US Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons
- 4) Provide adequate food
- 5) Provide Constructive programs and privileges for indefinite SHU inmates

In addition to these demands, we call for a complete end to solitary confinement and for union rights for prisoners, including the right to hold union meetings and the right to strike without being punished.