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Prisoners' Justice Day Observed - August 10, 2023

On Prisoners' Justice Day, we stand in solidarity with prisoners, their families, supporters and allies across the country as they honour the memory of the youth, men and women who have died in prisons.

Prisoners' Justice Day began as a commemoration of the preventable death of a prisoner in segregation at Millhaven Penitentiary 5 decades ago. Today it is recognized around the world as a day that marks the international struggles against continued neglect, silence and inaction regarding the human rights and legal protections of and for prisoners.

As more and more graves sites are confirmed, we must face the colonial legacy that has rendered prisons the current day residential schools for too many Indigenous Peoples. In addition, the Black Lives Matter movement has underscored deep-rooted and systemic racism and discrimination that costs too many racialized peoples their well-being and lives within Canada's criminal legal and prison systems. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated pre-existing human rights violations including long-term conditions of isolation and solitary confinement and a lack of access to the community-based alternatives to prison, particularly health and mental health care options.

Along with long term care and other forms of institutionalization, prisons must be called to account. We must ensure that the recommendations of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights with respect to the [Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons](#) are implemented to end and remedy egregious human and *Charter* rights violations and ensure judicial oversight and accountability of correctional services.

This Prisoners' Justice Day, and every day, let us honour those who have died as a result of systemic silence, neglect, discrimination and violence.

Let us honour those inside, their loved ones, advocates and allies who are working tirelessly to uphold human rights and dignity for all. Let us honour those seeking an end to systemic discrimination, including based on race, gender and ability. Let us honour the women who lived and died in the Prison for Women in Kingston and support the work of all whose courage and leadership both inside prisons and in their communities amount to decades of work to decolonize, decriminalize and decarcerate.

With humility and gratitude, we extend appreciation and respect to all marking this Prisoners' Justice Day. It is vital to hold Canada to account for its victimization, criminalization and imprisonment of those most economically, racially, socially and personally marginalized. Together, in solidarity, we can, and we must build a fair, just and inclusive future for all.

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