



## SOLIDARITY STATEMENT

Prisoners' Justice Day 2020

August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

On Prisoners' Justice Day, 2020, CAEFS joins prisoners and their supporters to honour the memory of those who have died while incarcerated and stands in solidarity with those still inside demanding change.

**Why August 10<sup>th</sup>?** August 10<sup>th</sup> marks the anniversary of the death of Eddie Nalon, who died while incarcerated in the segregation unit of the Millhaven Maximum Security Prison in Bath, Ontario in 1974. The following year, prisoners at Millhaven marked anniversary of Nalon's death by engaging in a hunger strike and refusing to work. By 1976, Prisoners' Justice Day was being marked by thousands of prisoners across Canada and external committees were formed to amplify the concerns of those locked inside.

**What is happening today, in 2020?** Since 1974, many more people have died while incarcerated and the injustices facing prisoners have continued to rise – along with Canada's prison population.

While Prisoners' Justice Day originated many years ago, the horrendous conditions that were faced by prisoners then continue to be faced by prisoners today. On Prisoners' Justice Day 2020, prisoners persevere in their non-violent resistance (hunger strikes, refusal to work) to a system that consistently violates their rights in horrific ways.

Just last week, the family of Soleiman Faqiri was devastated to learn that the Ontario Provincial Police would not be pressing charges in the death of their brother in the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario, in December 2016. Soleiman Faqiri, who was living with Schizophrenia, was beaten to death by several guards while in the correctional centre. For the Faqiri family and the families of all prisoners who have died in prisons around the world, justice is elusive.

The only way to ensure that not another person dies while in prison is to end incarceration - attempts at reforming a violent system has continually proven ineffective. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people in prison, and the global movement against anti-Black racism and police violence, have spotlighted the injustices embedded within our criminal 'justice' system. The kind of change required to end these injustices requires us, in turn, to imagine a world where accountability is not rooted in punishment, but in community care, in dignity, and in liberation.

**What Can be Done?** CAEFS, in partnership with the Prison for Women Memorial Collective, recently hosted a film screening and panel discussion with women with lived experience of incarceration highlighting their perspectives on Prisoner Justice Day.

Rashida Samji shared that "The best thing that anybody can do is to learn and educate themselves about the prison system: what happens, what injustices are done, and how the process does not help [...] in that respect you would be honouring those who have lost their lives".

---

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETIES (CAEFS) • 190 Bronson Ave. Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H4



(613) 238-2422



1-800-637-4606



admin@caefs.ca



www.caefs.ca

While Sara Tessier reminds us that “Prisons are non-essential. Real help means resources, community support. We all need to come together”.

The film (“The Garden Collective” by Sara Wylie) and the full panel discussion are **both available here.**

CAEFS is one of many organizations, collectives, and individuals organizing events and vigils to mark Prisoners’ Justice Day. We wish to amplify **the press release by the Abolition Coalition** that lists a number of these events, along with voices of people with lived experience of incarceration.

We also draw attention to the Faqiri family's ongoing calls for justice in the death of Soleiman Faqiri. More information about the Justice for Soleiman movement **can be found here.**

