



NEWS RELEASE

By Any Other Name: a 15 Day Spotlight on Solitary Confinement

OTTAWA, ONTARIO (November 14th 2020): On Monday, November 16th a coalition of groups invested in prisoner justice are launching a 15-day spotlight on the ongoing practice of solitary confinement in Canada. This spotlight leads up to the one-year anniversary of the supposed implementation of the Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) in federal Canadian prisons – an implementation that has received considerable public criticism over the failure of the Correctional Service of Canada to cooperate with the independent oversight committee, and a lack of meaningful change from the solitary confinement units they were intended to replace.

While the federal government may have announced that solitary confinement has been abolished in Canada, this 15-day spotlight - coordinated by The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, The John Howard Society of Canada, Prisoners' Legal Services, and the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University – will bring to light all of the ways in which the practice of solitary confinement continues to persist in Canada, just by any other name: SIUs, Restrictive Movement Routines, Mental Health Monitoring, Medical Isolation, Lockdowns, and Dry Celling.

"Solitary confinement is a practice not a place. Regardless of the unit or the reason, when one is locked up for long stretches of time without meaningful human contact, one is experiencing solitary confinement. Irrespective of the name we give it, solitary confinement has devastating effects on the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals, undermines one's chances of successful reintegration into community, and raises serious legal and ethical questions - this spotlight will make that clear to the public and to policy makers." - Dr. Adelina Iftene, Schulich School of Law - Dalhousie University

Daily events include panels with some of Canada's most respected and recognized advocates, scholars, lawyers, and politicians – and features the critical voices of individuals with lived experiences of incarceration and community groups. Including: Dr. Ivan Zinger (Correctional Investigator of Canada), Senator Kim Pate, Chip O'Connor, El Jones, Anthony Doob, John Conroy, Mr. Justice David Cole, Lisa Kerr, and Members of the Prison for Women Memorial Collective. More events, speakers, and engagement opportunities are still to be announced.

"The evidence is that the promised transformational change that would effectively end solitary confinement in our federal prisons is not being delivered by the Structured Intervention Units. Instead, we see significant solitary confinement taking place both inside and outside of the Structured Intervention Units under different names and often without even the earlier inadequate rights protections. This Spotlight on Solitary is intended to provide a platform for those interested in addressing this cruel practice to learn more and to help shape solutions that respect the rights, health and dignity of prisoners while keeping them and others safe." - Catherine Latimer, John Howard Society of Canada

"By putting a Spotlight on the ongoing cruelty of solitary confinement - and its disproportionate use against Indigenous people, Black people, people with mental health issues, and people who use drugs - it is CAEFS' hope that our collective frustration and desire for justice will lead us to seek and build meaningful alternatives not just to solitary confinement, but to incarceration. We cannot reform torture; we must abolish it." - Emilie Coyle, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

In addition to these events, a number of podcasts, op-eds, and reports released – starting with “Solitary by another name: The ongoing use of isolation in Canada’s federal prisons”, a report by the West Coast Prison Justice Society. Jennifer Metcalfe, one of the report’s authors, will join Emilie Coyle (Executive Director of CAEFS) and Catherine Latimer (Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada) in conversation on Monday to launch the 15 day spotlight.

“I think Canadians would be shocked to know the extent that our government continues to isolate prisoners for prolonged periods of time in conditions the United Nations considers to be torture or cruel treatment, outside of legislative authority.” - Jennifer Metcalfe, Prisoners’ Legal Services

[Registration for events is now open here.](#) Follow #SpotlightOnSolitary for more information and announcements.

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