

November 30, 2020

Dear Minister Blair

End Abusive Solitary Confinement

November 30, 2020 marks one year since the Structured Intervention Units were established. We were told that the federal government would end solitary confinement or administrative segregation in federal prisons. The reports of Professors Doob and Sprott indicate that they have not done so. In fact, the report from the West Coast Prison Justice Society makes it clear that prisoners are being held in isolated confinement under different names elsewhere in the prisons. This is very disturbing.

The Canadian courts have made it clear that such confinement violates the Charter rights of prisoners. The medical profession has explained the serious psychological, psychiatric, physical and emotional injuries that can result from isolated confinement. International human rights bodies have called such confinement a form of torture and have prohibited it if it lasts more than 15 days. The Trudeau government undertook to implement the recommendations of the Ashley Smith Coroner's Inquest recommendations with regard to restricting isolated confinement and this has not happened. Bill C-83's Structured Intervention Units violate Charter rights and disregard the findings of the Courts, the medical profession, and the government's own commitment to address prolonged solitary confinement.

I do not believe that the Correctional Service of Canada can be relied upon to fix the cruel isolated confinement that is spreading in federal prisons. I urge you to set up a judicial inquiry with subpoena powers to examine the different types of isolated confinement being practiced in federal correctional facilities and to make recommendations for legislative reforms that would be needed to finally end this abusive practice.

I look forward to hearing back from you about my concern.

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cc: PM Justin Trudeau

MP Bill Blair