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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **COALITION RENEWS CALLS TO END PROLONGED SOLITARY CONFINEMENT**

TORONTO - A coalition of groups including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the John Howard Society of Canada, Prisoners' Legal Services in British Columbia and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies are renewing their call for an immediate end to prolonged solitary confinement in Canada's federal prisons.

The organizations were among dozens recently invited to a "consultation" convened by the Correctional Service of Canada ("CSC") to discuss issues within Structured Intervention Units ("SIUs") - highly restrictive prison units that continue to subject individuals to prolonged, indefinite solitary confinement. A number of the invited community organizations have signed an open letter criticizing the "consultation" and calling on the federal government to take immediate action to end the torture in Canada's federal prisons.

"The federal government must cease playing games and calling groups to meaningless consultations," said Abby Deshman, Criminal Justice Director for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. "Correctional Services Canada appears more interested in convening one-sided discussion forums than doing the right thing and finally ending indefinite solitary confinement in Canadian prisons. And we must be clear: prolonged solitary confinement is torture."

Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, said "We can no longer settle for prison reforms that seek only to rebrand and make palatable what is undeniably inhumane. The government must act immediately to stop the torturous practice of solitary confinement - a practice that disproportionately impacts and harms Indigenous women and prisoners with mental illness - as we continue to push for real transformation in our justice system and in our communities."

"The United Nations defines solitary confinement as 22 or more hours of isolation per day without meaningful human contact. It considers solitary confinement to constitute torture or cruel treatment if it is used against people with existing mental health disabilities, or if it is used for more than 15 days against anyone. It is unacceptable for Canada to be engaging in torture," said Jennifer Metcalfe, Executive Director of Prisoners' Legal Services in British Columbia.

"People behind bars need supports. A 'one-size fits all' approach simply will not work. We are urging Correctional Services Canada and the Government of Canada to take concrete action now to live up to not only their international obligations, but their constitutional obligations under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms," said Catherine Latimer, Executive Director of John Howard Society Canada.

- ending the practice of solitary confinement wherever feasible - and prohibited, prolonged use of solitary confinement in its entirety;
- provision of real alternatives to solitary confinement other than return to maximum security, including transfers to lower security, healing lodges and treatment centres;
- implementing effective, independent oversight for SIUs;
- granting public access to information from CSC on the operation of SIUs;
- addressing the lack of access to SIU inmates by non-government service providers; and
- immediately re-establishing the SIU oversight body.

Visit <https://ccla.org/endsolitaryconfinement/> for a full copy of the open letter to CSC and a list of all signatories.

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#### **About the John Howard Society of Canada**

The John Howard Society of Canada is committed to effective, just and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime. As an organization of provincial and territorial Societies, our goal is to understand and respond to crime. To achieve these ends, we work with people who have come into conflict with the law. We also review, evaluate and advocate for change, while engaging in public education and promoting crime prevention through social development and community activities.

#### **About the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies**

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) is a national non-profit dedicated to addressing human rights issues impacting criminalized women, trans, non-binary, and Two Spirit people, particularly those who are federally incarcerated. CAEFS' work is organized into three pillars: defending prisoners' rights, building capacity, and raising awareness. CAEFS membership is comprised of 24 local member societies. These local societies are located across this land known as Canada and offer critical front-line services to their communities.

#### **About Prisoners' Legal Services**

Prisoners' Legal Services administers all prison-related legal aid for federal and provincial prisoners in British Columbia, other than appeals. We promote the rule of law, the application of the Charter, and openness and accountability within prisons. We promote the equal treatment of prisoners by assisting people in custody who have been discriminated against on human rights grounds, and promote the principle that incarcerated people must be treated with fairness and dignity.

#### **About the Canadian Civil Liberties Association**

The CCLA is an independent, non-profit organization with supporters from across the country. Founded in 1964, the CCLA is a national human rights organization committed to defending the rights, dignity, safety, and freedoms of all people in Canada.

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