Parliament urged to follow the law and conduct a comprehensive review of Bill C-83

\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\*

Ottawa, Ontario - June 21, 2024 - The promised end to abusive solitary confinement practices did not result from Bill C-83’s legislative reforms and its implementation over the last five years. Prolonged solitary confinement, which the Ontario Court of Appeal capped at 15 days, persists both inside and outside of the new Structured Intervention Unit regime. Independent external reviews of the basis for placement and maintenance in isolated confinement by the 5th day, as required by the B.C. Court of Appeal, are not taking place. Indigenous people are subjected to solitary confinement and uses of force at higher rates than other people in Canadian federal prisons. Black people and people with mental health disabilities are still forced to endure isolated confinement in disproportionately high numbers. Other provisions of Bill C-83 intended to provide better healthcare, patient advocacy, and allow for more humane alternatives to strip searches are not achieving the desired results or are yet to be implemented.

Human rights organizations, prisoners’ advocates, academics, and members of the legal profession are calling on Parliament to respect its statutory obligation to conduct the comprehensive review of Bill C-83 that should have begun a year ago. Legislative reforms are needed if we are to achieve humane conditions in our prison system.

“The legislative framework is so lax that CSC can follow the letter of the law and still be violating the Charter rights identified by Canadian courts. Legislative reforms are overdue,” – Catherine Latimer, John Howard Society of Canada

“Bill C-83 has done nothing to reduce the mass incarceration of Indigenous people by Canada. In fact, rates of incarceration have only grown for Indigenous women over the last five years to an appalling reality where half of the people in the federal prisons designated for women are Indigenous . A five-year review is needed urgently to expose the harsh realities of Canada’s abuse of Indigenous people in its prisons, and turn the tides toward self-determination.” – Emilie Coyle, The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)

“Rules are everywhere, yet there is still a serious lack of procedural fairness, including access to counsel, in SIU reviews in many federal prisons.” – Jennifer Metcalfe, Prisoners’ Legal Services

“There is a clear international consensus that prolonged or indefinite solitary confinement amounts to torture. It’s far past time for Canada to eradicate this destructive practice.” – Vibert Jack, BC Civil Liberties Association

“The continued practice of abusive solitary confinement in Canada prisons by another name is unacceptable. Through the five-year review of Bill C-83, Parliament must act to ensure both its spirit and letter are upheld.” – Shakir Rahim, Director of the Criminal Justice Program, Canadian Civil Liberties Association

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