



Mike Wood, Superintendent (Acting)  
Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre  
2244 Innes Road  
Gloucester, Ontario K1B 4C4

May 6, 2020

Dear Superintendent Wood,

It has come to our attention that Muslim prisoners at the Ottawa-Carlton Detention Centre (OCDC) are not being given access to medications at times outside the fasting hours for the holy month of Ramadan. We urge OCDC to take immediate steps to ensure accommodations are made for Muslim prisoners in accordance with its obligations under Ontario's *Human Rights Code* ("the Code"). We understand that this concern is also being raised by the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project and the Jail Accountability and Information Line (JAIL) hotline.

The Canadian Association of Muslim Women in Law ("CAMWL"), founded in 2013, is an organization of individuals united by our identification as Muslim women and our practice and/or study of the law. Our mandate is to advance the legal rights and interests of Muslim women and other marginalized and equity seeking groups in Canada. Our diverse membership shares a holistic commitment to justice and equality.

The month of Ramadan is the holiest month in the Muslim calendar and is marked by daily fasts from dawn (sehar) until dusk (iftar). Those observing the fasts must refrain from ingesting anything including food, drink or medication during the fasting period. Fasting is a fundamental pillar of the Muslim faith.

It is our understanding that the hours for medication distribution at OCDC are within the daily fasting hours for Ramadan this year, and that requests to receive medications outside of fasting hours have been largely denied.

The current pandemic heightens concerns around prisoner health. Incarcerated individuals have a higher rate of acute health issues, which, coupled with close living quarters, makes them vulnerable to transmittable illness like COVID-19. Especially during a pandemic, the health of individuals under your care must be paramount. By forcing Muslim prisoners to either miss out on taking their medication or compromise their beliefs, the OCDC is putting the lives of these individuals, and the entire OCDC community, at risk.

Furthermore, under the Code, and as stated in the Ministry of the Solicitor General's Inmate Information Guide for Adult Institutions, there is a legal duty to accommodate the human rights related needs of prisoners. Section 1 of the Code protects individuals from discrimination based on creed. By failing to provide medication to fasting prisoners either before or after their fast, the OCDC is in contravention of section 1 of the Code.



We urge you to take the required steps to provide fasting prisoners with their medication before or after their fast. This accommodation is necessary to comply with your Code obligations and to ensure the health of those under your care.

Thank you for your consideration on this important and urgent matter.

Signed,

Canadian Association of Muslim Women in Law (CAMWL)