

For Immediate Release

MEDIA ADVISORY

A march will take place on Algonquin Territory | in Ottawa as part of the Free Them All: National Day of Action

Saturday, March 20th, 2021 marks one year since the first COVID-19 cases linked to Canadian prisons were detected. A few days after a contract worker at the South West Detention Centre and a staff member at the Toronto South Detention Centre tested positive for the coronavirus, the first Canadian prisoner case of COVID-19 was detected at the Toronto South Detention Centre. Over 7,000 cases of COVID-19 amongst prisoners and prison staff have been reported since.

Despite calls to action, jurisdictions have failed to adequately depopulate human caging sites to reduce the spread of COVID-19 behind and beyond prison walls. Conditions inside jails, prisons, penitentiaries, immigration detention centres and other carceral institutions across the country, including in Ontario, continue to worsen with the frequent imposition of segregation-like conditions leaving prisoners fearful as a potential third wave of COVID rapidly looms.

On this date, prisoner rights activists, former prisoners, the loved ones of incarcerated people, frontline workers and community members will gather across various cities to demand immediate action from governments, along with punitive injustice and immigration system actors.

A march on unceded and unsundered Algonquin Territory | in Ottawa will be taking place as part of the ***Free Them All: National Day of Action***, which will highlight the injustices that criminalized and imprisoned people have endured prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will also demand concerted action to depopulate prisons and other carceral institutions to the extent possible during the pandemic, end torturous conditions of confinement faced by those who are not freed, increase protective supplies for and vaccines available to prisoners, and to choose real safety by taking steps to divest and dismantle prisons in order to build communities where we can keep each other safe from and better respond to social harm.

A list of our demands can be found here:

<https://www.torontoprisonersrightsproject.org/events/national-day-of-action-free-them-all>

WHEN?

Saturday, March 20th from 2:30pm to 4:00pm EST

WHERE?

Begins at the Ottawa Courthouse (2:30pm start time)

WHO?

Prisoner rights activists, former prisoners, the loved ones of incarcerated people, frontline workers, and community members from the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project and allied groups

WHAT?

A march in downtown Ottawa

LIVESTREAM:

Criminalization and Punishment Education Project Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/CPEPgroup/>

TO ARRANGE FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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