

Open letter to Bill Blair, Federal Minister of Public Safety, and Marco Mendicino, Federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, and Patty Hajdu, federal Minister of Health in support of #HungerStrikeLaval:

We have heard the calls for freedom from migrant men on hunger strike inside the Laval Immigration Detention Centre, and we write you today to lift our voices in harmony and solidarity with them. These men know that immigration detention is never safe, and that their incarceration during the COVID-19 pandemic is even more deadly. Set them free, and free all those living in immigration detention in Canada.

The current crisis is exposing perennially unsafe conditions for incarcerated people, whether in remand, in federal prison, or in immigration detention. The ongoing detention of the Laval hunger strikers—in stark contrast with the warnings of health care professionals—shows the world what many already know: Canada is willing to compromise public health and safety for the ability to keep scapegoating Black, Muslim, Arab, and other racialized non-citizens.

Jails, prisons, and detention centres are not designed for prisoners to maintain physical distance, report symptoms of illness, or receive proper medical treatment. Governments keep these facilities understaffed and inaccessible to send a cruel message to those they imprison. These tactics expose not only the prisoners, but all those who work in their facilities, and by extension the neighbouring communities, to illness and potential death. But we are demanding the release of detained migrants for their own sake, in recognition of their specific rights to be free and safe during this pandemic, and in the future.

**Free the Laval Hunger Strikers!
Free all migrant detainees!**

Desmond Cole