

From the Burnside prison strikers to the Laval hunger strikers:

Solidarity! Prisoners and former prisoners of Burnside and our fellow incarcerated people in federal and provincial institutions stand in support of the Laval hunger strikers.

Detainees in the Laval Immigration Monitoring Centre have been hunger striking for the past week. We stand with them in demanding their release. As people held in prisons and jails, we know first-hand the danger of COVID-19 infection in these facilities. Like the hunger strikers, we know the unclean conditions, the impossibility of social distancing, the lack of access to health care, and the health problems already caused by incarceration. These things make prisons dangerous at all times, but especially during a pandemic.

We also recognize that Indigenous, Black people, poor people, and other groups left out by society make up the majority of prisoners. Leaving marginalized people in prison during a pandemic is a violation of human rights that is targeted to the least powerful in society. The people who argue for us to be held in these facilities can sit safe at home while they condemn us to be left to sicken or die if an infection breaks out. We say this treatment is inhumane.

We cannot properly clean our environment. Our food is handled by other people. We see our comrades who are getting sick and dying on Rikers Island in New York who are neglected by government. We remind people of Nelson Mandela's observation, "It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."

Prison is never safe or healthy. We particularly condemn incarceration of people who have committed no crime: people who have simply come from one place to another.

We join the Laval strikers in their call for release. We salute your courage and wish you strength.

Free the Laval Strikers! Solidarity with all prisoners across the world!