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PRESS RELEASE

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STATE PRISON ATTORNEYS CONFIRM ABU-JAMAL HAS COVID PLUS CONGESTIVE HEART DISEASE. MARCH 6 VIRTUAL STREET MEETING TO DEMAND FREEDOM FOR MUMIA AND ALL INCARCERATED ELDERS!

News that imprisoned radio journalist and veteran Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal tested positive for COVID came at the very end of a press conference on March 3rd in front of DA Larry Krasner's offices. Abu-Jamal's attorney Bob Boyle called to deliver the news he'd just received from attorneys at the PA Department of Corrections. Boyle was one of the lawyers who five years ago filed the legal suit that won Hep C treatment for Abu-Jamal and other incarcerated people. Abu-Jamal confirmed via phone a few minutes later that he had been hospitalized for four days in a local medical center where 10lbs of fluid were removed from his body. Further tests determined that he has Congestive Heart Disease and COVID.

Dr. Ricardo Alvarez, an Independent physician with decades of work in prison advocacy, explained that the prison infirmary where Mumia is now being held is no place for those who are ill or elderly. "The only acceptable treatment for Mumia Abu-Jamal is his freedom." He added, "We have a simple cost-effective public health intervention in the face of COVID in prisons- release our elderly prisoners. Data shows they do not pose a public safety risk."

Abu-Jamal, a political prisoner and 66 year-old senior with COVID, cirrhosis of the liver plus a serious heart condition needs not just medical attention but the specialized diet and exercise and loving human contact that he can never receive in prison.

A virtual town hall, entitled "Freedom has never been so close", on Saturday, Mar. 6, 2-4pm will feature up to the minute updates on Abu-Jamal's medical and legal developments and upcoming actions. Other parts of the program include COVID in prisons, political prisoners, police brutality and mass incarceration and special appearances by Chairman Fred Hampton Jr and Chicago Hip-hop artist Vic Mensa. Register in advance at shorturl.at .

Abu-Jamal's new medical diagnosis comes after 39 years of wrongful imprisonment due to police, judicial and prosecutorial misconduct—28 years unconstitutionally held in the infernal isolation of death row.

The prison infirmary at SCI Mahanoy is the very same place that in 2014 diagnosed Mumia as having critically low blood sugar. The infirmary then ignored the notation in his chart to monitor his blood sugar levels for three weeks. It was not until he fainted and went into renal failure that he was rushed to the hospital. It took a federal civil rights lawsuit and worldwide protests for Mumia to receive the fast acting anti-viral cure to his belatedly diagnosed Hepatitis C. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections routinely fails to provide adequate care for Abu-Jamal and thousands of other incarcerated people.

Aging people in prison are vulnerable to premature death if they contract the flu, cancer, hepatitis, pneumonia, COVID-19 or congestive heart disease, in Abu-Jamal case. The only humane recourse is to let elderly and vulnerable prisoners go home.

Most governors have refused to decarcerate, failing to protect prisoners' lives from COVID transmission by guards, who bring coronavirus into the prison because many live in rural areas designated COVID "red zones." Holding a captive population under these conditions is a crime against humanity. It is morally indefensible because excessive and draconian sentencing in the last 40 years means that many US incarcerated people have grown old serving life terms or 40-year sentences. In contrast, most developed nations limit sentences to 10-12 years even for the most serious offenses.

Dr. Johanna Fernandez, Associate Professor at Baruch College remarked, "Ultimately we want a society in which social problems are not solved with carceral repression. Today's reality has turned US prisons into cruel, old people's homes for poor Black and Brown workers warehoused at the height of urban deindustrialization in the 1980s and 1990s when American capitalism could not employ large swaths of city dwellers." She added, **"At the very least, we demand that Dr. Ricardo Alvarez be allowed daily check-ins with Mumia's medical handlers in the prison."**

Gov. Wolf promised to reprieve 1,800 prisoners but he has only granted 165. Separately, 14 people sentenced to life in prison, mostly from Philadelphia, were pardoned to life on parole by Gov. Wolf on Dec. 19th. However, he waited until Feb. 12th to approve their releases, too late for Bruce Norris, 69, who died from COVID 19 on Jan. 30th. (<https://bit.ly/3uLzsq2>)

At least 110 incarcerated people have died of COVID in PA prisons. And "90% of inmates who died of coronavirus in 2020 were over 50 with likely pre-existing health conditions," stated 32 PA lawmakers in a Feb. 8th letter to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf. (<https://bit.ly/3uH11AH>)

Free Mumia and all incarcerated people over 50 in Pennsylvania and every state prison immediately!