

Prison Officials Continue To Deny Comrade Rashid Cancer Treatment (July 18, 2022)

On July 1, 2022, we learned that after months of medical neglect on the part of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Correction (ODRC) and most recently the Virginia Department of Corrections (VaDOC), our comrade and friend, Kevin "Rashid" Johnson has prostate cancer. Out of the thirteen samples that were taken in the biopsy performed on June 23, 2022, eleven of them were malignant. This is a massive failure on the part of not only the prison and medical staff but the entire department of corrections in both states. And I'll explain why...

Rashid deals with chronic hypertension (high blood pressure) as do most of the estimated 2,000,000 imprisoned people in this country, and as such has routine blood work done every few months. In the course of having his blood drawn during one of these visits on October 8, 2021, it was observed that he had elevated PSA levels of 14.3 ng/mL, much higher than the 0 - 3.5ng/mL that is considered normal for a person of his age. Elevated PSA levels in the blood are one of the hallmark signs of cancer being present in the body. Upon seeing these levels, doctors ordered more blood to be drawn and tested. This time Rashid's PSA levels came back higher still at 14.6ng/mL. The doctor wrote the referral for Rashid to see a urologist on October 26, 2021, and this order was approved on November 1, 2021. However, Rashid was never alerted to this and the appointment was never made on his behalf. Rashid would not have a biopsy performed until almost 8 months later on June 23, 2022.

To understand the magnitude of this failure, one must understand that prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men in the U.S., with the exception of lung cancer and that there is no cure for metastatic prostate cancer. It is appalling that there was an 8-month gap between multiple blood tests indicating PSA levels over three times what is considered to be *abnormal* and a biopsy actually being performed on our comrade. With any cancer, early detection and treatment are the keys to saving lives but survival rates decline significantly when cancer is detected in the later stages or as is the case with Rashid, purposefully left untreated and allowed to fester by incompetent and inhumane prison and medical staff.

Incompetence, inhumanity, and willful neglect sadly are rampant in Amerika's prison system. In fact, one could go so far as to say that it is a requirement of the job. That's absolutely not an exaggeration. Take, for instance, the plight of Shawn "Flip" Joyner who is imprisoned at Nottoway Correctional Facility along with Rashid and whose story Rashid happened to come across several months ago. Shawn is suffering from terminal brain cancer that has spread to affect multiple internal organs and his ability to walk. The latest of these tumors is inoperable yet still, Shawn languishes inside of Nottoway enduring the squalid conditions without access to proper medical care, nourishment, or the love of his family who has been desperately pleading for his compassionate release along with the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party for some time now.

Cases like Shawn's and Rashid's are aided by the indifference, if not, outright contempt that prison officials and the public have for imprisoned people and the complacency that most of the general public feels toward people who end up confined for whatever reasons. The system works hard to make this happen. Just as hard as they work to keep the atrocities that are acted out upon this population of people behind prison walls in the dark. To knowingly let someone's body and mind slowly be consumed with cancerous growths is unspeakably cruel and almost medieval in its level of barbarity. Especially when these people have already served an inordinate amount of time, pose no threat to the public, and have families that are more than willing and capable of bringing them home to provide them with care.

Circling back to Rashid's current plight, time is of the essence. A follow-up visit to determine how far this cancer has progressed and to determine a course of action needs to happen now. We do not have time to wait. Even now, although his cancer has not yet been staged, Rashid is experiencing some of the tell-tale signs of it having metastasized such as extreme "cancer fatigue", swelling of extremities, and body aches. He is also still passing blood in his urine from a biopsy that was performed almost a month ago!

Since our initial call to action and over the past couple of weeks friends, comrades, and supporters of Kevin "Rashid" Johnson have answered the call to defend him in an overwhelming display of unity but we must do more. Rashid has explained to us that the prison officials inside of Nottoway have not indicated in any way that they intend on doing the right thing and have, in fact, despite their promise that Rashid would be taken back to the hospital within two weeks of his July 1st diagnosis, enacted a quarantine for at least the next ten days. During this quarantine, no one will be allowed to leave the facility at all, even for medical appointments. This seems suspicious and will further delay the chance for Rashid to receive timely treatment. To that end, we are urging all who are able to continue to call and email, and talk about this issue with their friends, co-workers, and families. We must make Rashid's situation and the plight of all who are imprisoned and suffering under torturous conditions mainstream topics of conversation as everyone on this earth deserves to have food, shelter, and healthcare. At a minimum, those are basic human rights that can not and should not be denied. As a society, who are we if we allow this to go unchecked?

Dare To Struggle, Dare To Win!

All Power To The People!

Shupavu wa Kirima
General Secretary, RIBPP

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**For information on how to get involved please visit rashidmod.com or email:
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