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Detroit contingent to convene Tuesday morning press conference in support of Georgia prisoner protesters

DETROIT – A metro Detroit contingent of the **Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights** will convene a press conference in front of Mound Road Correctional Facility in Detroit at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 14 to urge a halt to, and demand a federal level government fact-finding investigation of reports of, the violent retaliation by Georgia prison officials to a peaceful protest of prisoners across several Georgia prisons.

“A violent response to peaceful protest is intolerable,” says Kwasi Akwamu, a Detroit organizer with the nation-wide support group, and a member of the Detroit Chapter of All of Us or None of Us prisoner rights support group. “This is reminiscent of the 1960s, when civil rights protesters were attacked with dogs, water hoses, and police batons, simply because they staged marches and sit-ins to bring peaceful attention to social injustices in this society.”

In the single largest prisoner protest to human rights abuses in this country, prisoners at several Georgia state prisons issued a press release on Dec. 8, 2010, stating their intentions to call “a peaceful, one day protest,” that they were “striking to press the Georgia Department of Corrections (DOC) to stop treating them like animals and slaves and institute programs that address their basic human rights.”

Begun on December 9, 2010, the prisoners' peaceful protest has been historic in scope and in the unity of thousands of black, brown, white, Muslim, Christian, Rastafarian prisoners, including those at Augusta, Baldwin, Calhoun, Hancock, Hays, Macon, Rogers, Smith, Telfair, Valdosta and Ware State Prisons. For five days, now, these men have shut down all activity at most of these facilities.

“Due to the harsh conditions faced behind bars and the need for prison reform, the men are staying in their cells as a form of peaceful protest. **No officials or staff have been threatened and no property has been damaged.** These men's requests are reasonable and in accord with the basic respect and treatment every human being deserves,” said Elaine Brown, a social activist and former Black Panther Party leader. Brown is spearheading the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners' Rights.

The prisoners are petitioning the DOC for their human rights, including being paid for their labor, provided educational opportunities, decent health care and nutritional meals, a halt to cruel and unusual punishments, and just parole decisions.

While the prisoners' protest has remained non-violent, the DOC has used violent measures to force the men back to work—under the banner of law, despite the 13th Amendment's abolition of slavery. At Augusta State Prison, several inmates were brutally ripped from their cells by CERT Team guards and

beaten, resulting in broken ribs, one man beaten beyond recognition. At Telfair, the Tactical Squad roughed up prisoners and destroyed all their property. At Macon and Hays State Prisons, Tactical Squads have menaced the men for days, removing some to the “hole,” the wardens ordering heat and hot water turned off. Tear gas has been used to force men out of their cells at various prisons, while guards patrol grounds with assault rifles.

“We self-righteously criticize Third World countries for the brutal mistreatment of their prisoners, yet throughout the United States, including right here in Michigan, prisoners are treated with an increasingly diminished humanity,” states Akwamu, a former prisoner. “We forget that while we allow prisoners to be treated as brutes, the overwhelming majority will someday be back on the streets, in our communities. And what kind of persons can we honestly expect for people so treated to be once they return?”

The DOC has made itself unavailable to the press and prisoner family members, creating fears that, behind closed doors, the Department will escalate this peaceful protest to a violent confrontation. The Coalition is urging the DOC to come to the table in peace to address the prisoners’ concerns.

More information about the **Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners’ Rights** can be found on its Facebook page.

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