



Support prisoners on hunger strike for humane conditions!

California prisoners in Pelican Bay State Prison's SHU (Supermax unit) are starting a hunger strike on July 1, 2011.

The hunger striking prisoners, who live in harsh longterm isolation, are going on an indefinite hunger strike as of July 1st to protest the cruel and inhumane conditions of their imprisonment. The hunger strike was organized by prisoners of all racial groups in an unusual show of racial unity. The hunger strikers' **five core demands** are, briefly:

- 1. Eliminate group punishments.** Instead, practice individual accountability. When an individual prisoner breaks a rule, the prison often punishes a whole group of prisoners of the same race. This policy has been applied to keep prisoners in the SHU indefinitely and to make conditions increasingly harsh.
- 2. Abolish the debriefing policy and modify active/inactive gang status criteria.** Prisoners are accused of being active or inactive participants of prison gangs using false or highly dubious evidence, and are then sent to longterm isolation (SHU). They can escape these torturous conditions only if they "debrief," that is, provide information on gang activity. Debriefing produces false information (wrongly landing other prisoners in SHU, in an endless cycle) and can endanger the lives of debriefing prisoners and their families.
- 3. Comply with the recommendations of the US Commission on Safety and Abuse in Prisons (2006) regarding an end to longterm solitary confinement.** This bipartisan commission specifically recommended to "make segregation a last resort" and "end conditions of isolation." Yet as of May 18, 2011, California kept 3,259 prisoners in SHUs and hundreds more in Administrative Segregation waiting for a SHU cell to open up. Some prisoners have been kept in isolation for *more than thirty years*.
- 4. Provide adequate food.** Prisoners report unsanitary conditions and small quantities of food that do not conform to prison regulations. There is no accountability or independent quality control of meals.
- 5. Expand and provide constructive programs and privileges for indefinite SHU inmates.** The hunger strikers are pressing for opportunities "to engage in self-help treatment, education, religious and other productive activities..." Currently these opportunities are routinely denied, even if the prisoners want to pay for correspondence courses themselves. Examples of privileges the prisoners want are: one phone call per week, and permission to have sweatsuits and watch caps. (Often warm clothing is denied, though the cells and exercise cage can be bitterly cold.) All of the privileges mentioned in the demands are already allowed at other SuperMax prisons (in the federal prison system and other states).

How can I support the prisoners?

1. Sign the online petition today!
2. Ask all your friends to sign it
3. Keep informed about the hunger strike, and attend rallies, protests & other support events
4. Donate to California Prison Focus to help us monitor the hunger strike

Online petition and updated information available at:

<http://www.prisons.org/hungerstrike.htm>

