

January 11, 2012
Mr. John Wetzel, Secretary, Department of Corrections
2520 Lisburn Road
P.O. Box 598
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0598
Fax: [717-703-2621](tel:717-703-2621)

Dear Mr. Wetzel,

The National Lawyers Guild and the Human Rights Research Fund call on you to move Mumia Abu-Jamal from Administrative Custody (AC) in the Restrictive Housing Unit at SCI Mahanoy into general population. While we understand that capital inmates in Pennsylvania who have had sentence reductions *may* be transferred to and held in AC for a *brief* transition period, Mr. Abu-Jamal has now been in AC for four weeks.

Since Mr. Abu-Jamal's transfer on December 7, 2011, he has been held in conditions far more restrictive than at SCI Greene. He is now shackled and handcuffed whenever outside his cell, his number of weekly visits has been reduced to one (for one hour), his phone call privileges have been reduced, the number of stamps and envelopes he can use is greatly limited, and his commissary privileges have been revoked. He is also barred from having a television, typewriter or radio in his cell, and access to personal possessions such as books is also severely limited. There is no ethical or rational basis justifying Mr. Abu-Jamal's confinement in AC under conditions significantly harsher than those on death row. Once the District Attorney announced that its office would not seek a new sentencing trial, Mr. Abu-Jamal should have been transferred into general population. Such a transfer is not dependent on a judge's formal resentencing to life imprisonment. Given that, and given his exemplary disciplinary record, we can only conclude that Mr. Abu-Jamal's prolonged detainment in solitary confinement is in retaliation for his highly publicized and internationally-supported efforts to secure a new trial and intended to placate those who have been demanding his execution.

As you may know, for over a century, the United States Supreme Court has recognized the psychological harm caused by solitary confinement (*In re Medley*, 134 U.S. 160 (1890)). The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America in 2006 found that the increasing use of such segregation is counter-productive and frequently results in violence inside facilities while also contributing to post-release recidivism. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, recently called for a ban on solitary confinement longer than 15 days, reiterating that it can amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The treatment currently afforded to Mr. Abu-Jamal violates the United States' obligations under the Convention Against Torture. We urge you to immediately transfer and assign Mr. Abu-Jamal to general population with full visitation, phone and commissary privileges and access to all programs and services.

Sincerely,
National Lawyers Guild
Heidi Boghosian, Executive Director
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Human Rights Research Fund
Kathleen Cleaver, Co-Director

Seth Williams, DA, Philadelphia

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