

Lawsuit exposes horrific conditions in Washington D.C. jail

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On April 24, the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs filed suit in Washington D.C. federal district court against the District of Columbia on behalf of three inmates incarcerated at the Central Detention Facility and the Correctional Treatment Facility (D.C. Jail).

In the United States, both capitalist political parties incessantly rail against Russia, China and other foreign rivals about “human rights” violations. The US regularly sanctions countries and justifies wars in the name of defending “human rights.” The conditions of the D.C. correctional facility, located immediately adjacent to the now-defunct RFK Memorial Stadium, and about a five minute drive from the federal government on Capitol Hill, reveal starkly the criminality and hypocrisy which pervades the US government’s propaganda.

The lawsuit alleges that the Democratic Party-controlled city “is deliberately indifferent to its obligation [to provide health care for those in its custody] and the Jail’s provision of health care is systemically dysfunctional, resulting in people with serious medical needs being unable to access necessary medical, pharmaceutical, and dental care.”

According to the DC Policy Center, at least 60 percent of the facility’s 1,400 male and female detainees “are awaiting trial, or in other words, have not yet been charged with a crime.”

The three plaintiffs themselves are victims of the correctional facility’s abuse and “bring this action on behalf of themselves and all others detained in the Jail.” According to the affidavit, plaintiff V.C. “suffers from multiple serious medical conditions, including congestive heart failure, prediabetes, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and hypertension.” These disorders require the individual to use a defibrillator and take

nine different medications daily.

Despite this, between October 2021 and the present, the facility has failed to provide the medication on time, or at all, on at least 19 occasions, despite some of the medicine being labeled as “keep-on-person” and having potentially life-threatening consequences if a dose is missed.

At times, the abuse is downright sadistic. Plaintiff B.L., the victim of a gunshot wound that has severely damaged his urinary tract, is required “to self-catheterize four to six times a day.” Despite this known condition, the jail “has consistently failed to provide B.L. with the lubricant and proper catheter tubes he needs to self-catheterize, as well as the alcohol wipes he needs to sanitize the insertion site,” leading to “bleeding” and “scarring.”

The facility is operated by Unity Healthcare, the region’s largest non-profit health care operator, which has managed health services for inmates at the D.C. department of corrections since 2006. In 2021, Unity Healthcare had revenues of \$129,446,729. The government of the District of Columbia office of contracting and procurement awarded Unity Healthcare the Department of Corrections Inmate Comprehensive Medical Services contract in 2019.

The facility has been the subject of much scrutiny in the past, and has a history of poor treatment of inmates, many of whom have not even been convicted of a crime. Many inmates at the facility, mostly working class, are being held awaiting trial and cannot afford bail.

In 2004, Jonathan Magbie, a 27-year-old quadriplegic man, paralyzed from the neck down, was detained at the jail for possession of a marijuana cigarette. While serving a 10-day sentence, he developed acute pneumonia as a result of the facility’s negligence in

providing proper respiratory care, and died. The facility also failed to provide him sufficient nourishment and hydration. The District of Columbia paid out a settlement of \$4.6 million to his family as a result of Magbie's needless death.

In 2021 the facility was sued due to its lack of pandemic safety. The lawsuit alleged "violat[ions of]... constitutional rights under the Fifth and Eighth Amendments by failing to ensure safe conditions in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic."

In March, the conditions of the jail came to light when approximately a dozen Republican and Democratic House members visited the facility to "expose the truth" about the facility, according to recorded statements given by Republican congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene at the time.

Lawmakers of both capitalist parties have discovered a newfound interest in the facility because alleged participants of the fascistic coup of January 6, 2021 have been held there awaiting trial. The representatives visited the newer section of the jail that houses the January 6 defendants, yet showed no interest in the plight of the vast majority of inmates.

The Democratic representatives, who supposedly toured alongside the fascist Republican delegation in order to "be a check" on the latter's claims, intended to promote the coup participants, made all efforts to paint the prison in rosy colors. Jasmine Crockett, Democrat from Texas, commented that the jail was "probably as good as a jail can be." Robert Garcia, Democrat of California, remarked that he was "surprised at how much open space there was" in the jail.

This effort to cover over the deeply inhumane conditions at the jail is of a piece with the Democratic Party's right-wing "law and order" orientation which it stepped up in the wake of the January 6 coup and has continued to use to promote law enforcement politically in the midst of a deepening social crisis.

For her part, the fascist and delusional Greene went so far as to allege that "the non-Jan. 6 prisoners have access to educational programs and opportunities that Jan. 6 defendants do not," according to the *Washington Post*. In fact, the conditions of the jail housing the coup participants are better than those of the prisoners drawn from the city's mostly working class population, whose plight was studiously avoided by the bipartisan delegation.

While the United States proceeds to lecture governments across the planet about "human rights" and "democracy," it has the largest percentage of incarcerated citizens in the world. According to World Population Review, in terms of rates of incarceration per 100,000 citizens, the USA stands at 629, with Russia at 326 and China 119, respectively.

This facility is only one of many across the United States engaging in such gross violations of its own constitution. Prisons predominantly lock up members of the working class, abuse them, enslave them for cheap labor, and deprive them of their human dignity.

Only through a united working class with a socialist perspective can these corrupt institutions of "justice" be dismantled and replaced with a system that rehabilitates, not tortures and enslaves, its population.



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