

April 29, 2015

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**Open letter to Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Wolf and Department of Corrections  
Secretary John Wetzel**

**Re: Urgent need for independent medical treatment for Mumia Abu-Jamal and for  
his release from prison so that he can receive that treatment**

*Internationally renowned political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal is seriously ill. He is currently suffering from life threatening diabetes, full body skin disease, weight loss -- 80 pounds in the last two to three months -- extreme dehydration, multiple neurological symptoms -- uncontrollable shaking, slurred speech, loss of memory with fugue states -- and is wheelchair bound. He was initially placed in the prison infirmary for the severe skin problem, released back into general population only to become sicker, very possibly as a result of inappropriate treatment for the skin problem. Most serious, despite three blood tests during his stay in the infirmary, he was not diagnosed for the diabetes he had developed which only weeks later led to his going into diabetic shock. He was rushed to the ICU at the closest hospital and had his sugar level somewhat stabilized only to be returned to the prison two days later while still very sick, causing more medical crises. All developments since the above description have only been more frightening: more weight loss, inability to walk other than in baby steps, sporadic incoherence, excruciating pain, massive skin peeling, and blood in his urine. And still no diagnosis of this shocking skin disease. Mr. Abu-Jamal is in immediate need of medical help from outside the prison system as the neglect and malpractice of the Department of Corrections is directly responsible for the inadequately addressed and alarming deterioration of his health. Only if he is released will Mr. Abu-Jamal be able to get the proper medical care to give him a chance at recovery.*

We, the undersigned, call on Governor Thomas Wolf and Secretary John Wetzel **to promptly authorize the independent doctors Mr. Abu-Jamal has chosen to coordinate his diagnosis and treatment plan, and to involve the specialists needed to address his many medical challenges. This would require allowing those doctors (1) to have regular phone access with Mr. Abu-Jamal while he is in the infirmary, (2) to be able to communicate freely and regularly with the prison infirmary physicians who are overseeing Mr. Abu-Jamal's care, and (3) to schedule an immediate independent medical examination.**

The horrific medical care Mr. Abu-Jamal has received at SCI Mahanoy with life threatening consequences is by no means unique to him. The epidemic level of diabetes throughout Pennsylvania's prisons and the skin problems and hepatitis infections many of the prisoners experience speak volumes about the vulnerability to serious disease that simply entering the prison system causes. **We, therefore, call for an independent investigation of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections medical system. In particular, this investigation must focus on profit-making organizations hired by the Department of Corrections that place priority on cost cutting rather than the quality of care provided to prisoners, resulting in fewer referrals to hospitals when needed and more deaths.**

Finally, given the extensive evidence of Mr. Abu-Jamal's innocence, long prevented from being addressed fairly in the courts, and now the evidence that Mr. Abu-Jamal's very life is in danger while in the prison system, **we call for his immediate release from prison.**

SIGNERS (List in formation)

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

**Minister Louis Farrakhan**

**Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann**, former President of the UN General Assembly

**Ramsey Clark**, former Attorney General of the United States

**Cornel West**, Professor Emeritus, Princeton University; Professor, Union Theological Seminary

**Charles Rangel**, Congressman, New York

**George Gresham**, President, Local 1199 SEIU

**Estela Vasquez**, Executive Vice President, Local 1199 SEIU

**Alice Walker**, writer and poet

**Danny Glover**, actor

**Cynthia McKinney**, former Congresswoman, Georgia

**V Charles Barron**, State Assemblyman, East New York

**Bill Perkins**, State Senator, Harlem, NY

**Chris Hedges**, author, Pulitzer prize-winning journalist

**Michael Parenti**, political scientist, historian, cultural critic, has taught at many US and international universities

**James H. Cone**, Charles Augustus Briggs Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology, Union Theological Seminary; founder of Black Liberation Theology

**Mark Lewis Taylor**, Maxwell M. Upson Professor of Theology and Culture, Princeton Theological Seminary

**H. Yamamoto**, General Secretary, Doro-Chiba International Labor Solidarity Committee, Japan

**Imam Al-Hajj Talib 'Abdur-Rashid**, Vice President, The Muslim Alliance in North America

**Sister Fredrica Bey**, Executive Director, Women in Support of the Million Man March

**Gregory Muhammad**, Nation of Islam Student Regional Reform Minister

**Sister Catherine Muhammad**, Administrative Assistant to Gregory Muhammad

**Lynne Stewart**, former attorney and political prisoner

**William P. Quigley**, Professor of Law, Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana

**Azadeh N. Shahshahani**, President, National Lawyers Guild

**Michael Tarif Warren, Esq.**

**Natsu Taylor Saito**, attorney and law professor

**Paul Wright**, Director, Human Rights Defense Center; Editor, *Prison Legal News*

**Judith L. Bourne**, attorney, U.S. Virgin Islands; former National Co-Chair,

National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL)  
**Kenosha Ferrell, Esq., LL.M.**, National Conference of Black Lawyers member and concerned citizen  
**Michael Coard, Esq.**, attorney, university professor, radio show host, magazine journalist  
**Erika Kreider, Esq.**, attorney  
**J. Kathleen Marcus, J.D.**, Marcus Law  
**Joan P. Gibbs, Esq.**, National Conference of Black Lawyers  
**Kerry McLean, Esq.**, Board Member, National Lawyers Guild; NCBL member  
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**Ann Garrison**, print and radio journalist, Pacifica Radio, *San Francisco Bay View*, Black Agenda Report, Black Star News  
**Michael Albert**, *Z Magazine*  
**Katha Pollitt**, writer  
**Norman Solomon**, author; co-founder and coordinator, RootsAction.org  
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**Joy James**, Professor of Humanities and Political Science, Williams College  
**Sonia Nieto**, Professor Emerita, Language, Literacy, and Culture, College of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts  
**Lisa Guenther**, Professor of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University  
**Thomas Hansen**, Mexico Solidarity Organization, an immigrant justice advocacy university  
**Rosemari Mealy**, human rights advocate; Adjunct Assistant Professor, City University of New York (CUNY)  
**Terry Bisson**, science fiction writer  
**Patrick Le Hyaric**, French Deputy at the European Parliament; Director, L'Humanité, France  
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**Claude Guillaumaud-Pujol**, Professor of American Studies, Clermont

Ferrand University, France

**Hans-Christoph Graf von Sponeck**, UN Assistant Secretary-General (ret.)

**Sabine Lösing**, member of the European Parliament, member and Coordinator of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), Vice-Chair and Coordinator of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE), Germany

**Katja Keul**, member, German parliament

**Wolfgang Bittner**, Dr.jur., Schriftsteller, Germany

**Sabine Kebir**, author; Co-Director of the German PEN, Germany

**Bernd Schirmer**, German PEN

**Annette Groth**, member of the German Parliament; member of the Human Rights Committee of the German Parliament, Germany

**Dr. Michael Schiffmann**, English Department of the University of Heidelberg, translator, editor, and author, Germany

**Vu The Dung**, Vietnamese writer and poet; member of the German PEN, Germany

**Hans Till**, poet and translator; member of the German PEN, Germany

**Heike Hänsel**, member of the German parliament, Germany

**Annette Schiffmann**, public relations counselor; Chair, German Network Against the Death Penalty, Germany

**Charlotte Wiedemann**, journalist, Berlin, Germany

**Political Activists' Alliance Network to Stop the G7**, Elmau, Germany

**Elfriede Jelinek**, novelist and playwright; member of the International PEN; laureate of the Nobel Prize in literature, Austria

**Dr. Jan Oberg**, Director of TFF—Transnational Peace and Future Research, sociologist, Sweden

**Dr. Farhang Jahanpour**, Tutor at the Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford, England

**Akiko Hoshino**, Representative of the Hoshino Defense Committee, Japan

**Nina Triffleman**, member, Compassionate Seattle

**Malaika H. Kambon**, People's Eye Photography

**Jackson Browne**, singer

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