

April 29, 2015

Contact: Dr. Suzanne Ross, suzannevross@aol.com, 917 584 2135

**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
Bina Ahmad, National Vice President, National Lawyers Guild; criminal defense attorney
Sally Frank, Professor of Law, Drake University
Rosie Hinnebusch, attorney-at-law, Sarasota, Florida
Bill Montross, National Lawyers Guild, Bethesda, Maryland
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Robin D. G. Kelley, Distinguished Professor of History, UCLA
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Jamal Joseph, Professor of Film, Columbia University
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
Farah Jasmine Griffin, Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and African-American Studies, Columbia University
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
Catherine Margaté, Mayor, Malakoff, France
Didier Paillard, Mayor, Saint-Denis, France
Ian Brossat, Deputy Mayor of Paris, France
Nathalie Appéré, Mayor, Rennes, France
Pierre Laurent, Senator and National Secretary of the French Communist Party, France
Jacky Hortaut, Coordinator, Collectif Mumia, France
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

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Jackson Browne, singer

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