



PASAN

GMSH
GAY MEN'S SEXUAL HEALTH ALLIANCE



WHA

June 27, 2024

Dear Ontario AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) and colleagues of ASOs,

We, the African Caribbean Council on HIV in Ontario (ACCHO), Prisoner's HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN), Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative of Ontario (WHA), Ontario AIDS Network (OAN), and Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH), call on our communities across Ontario to acknowledge Prisoner Justice Day (PJD) this August 10th, 2024, and to extend our commitment to addressing the harms perpetrated by the prison system throughout the year.

Prisoner Justice Day Background:

PJD is held annually on August 10th. This day initially started after a prisoner, Eddie Nalon, died in segregation at Mill Haven Maximum Security Prison in Bath, Ontario. PJD is a day to honour, remember and bring visibility to those who have died inside Canadian prisons. On this day in 1974, prisoners came together to fast and refuse to work as an act of solidarity. Refusing to eat and work are amongst the minimal tools of protest available to those in prison. Beyond prison walls, PJD has been a day for allies to join in solidarity to raise awareness about the deaths and injustices that occur behind prison walls.

Why PJD is important to our work:

PJD is an opportunity for us to collectively raise awareness about, and take action against, the over-incarceration of Black, Brown, Asian, and Indigenous communities, Trans people, 2-Spirit people and Non-Binary people and the injustices these communities face. It is also an opportunity for us to raise awareness about the criminalization of HIV, the reality that incarceration deeply intersects with risk and rates of HIV/HCV, and that people living with HIV/HCV in prison continue to face health inequities and heightened death rates. PJD is a day for us to raise awareness and strengthen our action to address the deep level of violence and institutional racism against these communities from police, prison guards, and the systems in which they work. Finally, it is an important time for us to pause and remember those who have died in prisons across Ontario.

Showing solidarity and moving into action:

With these realities in mind, we call on communities across Ontario to show solidarity with those who are imprisoned, engage in PJD organizing, support local events and strengthen our collective actions. Examples of this work include:

- Support local groups organizing events for Prisoner Justice Day by showing up, offering food or other supports, and sharing information about it with your communities
- Take time to honour those who have died in prisons, particularly those who have died of unnatural causes
- Hold spaces for dialogue, learning and reflection about PJD, incarceration trends, and violence in the system using resources such as:
 - [Tracking Injustice](#), a website tracking Canadian police-involved deaths and deaths in custody and engage in community dialogue about ways to support this work.



PASAN

GMSH
GAY MEN'S SEXUAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

ONTARIO
AIDS
NETWORK
LEARNING, LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

WHA

- [“Criminalized Lives”](#) by Alexander McClelland and illustrated by Eric Kostiu Williams, a book focussing on the criminalization of HIV and the harm caused particularly for poor, Black and Indigenous people, gay men, and women in Canada.
 - [Walls to Bridges](#), a program offering for-credit university and college courses within the prison system through a partnership with Grand Valley Institution for Women and McMaster Indigenous Research Institute.
 - [Prison 4 Women \(P4W\) Memorial Collective](#) initiatives.
 - [Criminalization and Punishment Education Project](#), a project bringing together critical criminologists, students, researchers, community members, front-line workers and those affected by criminalization and punishment dedicated to public education, activism and research and a commitment to creating change
 - [Rittenhouse: A New Vision](#), a small grassroots organization committed to transformative justice, healing and structural change
 - [PASAN](#), an AIDS Service Organization supporting and advocating for prisoner rights with communities disproportionately affected by incarceration, focusing on prison health, harm reduction, HIV and HCV.
- Identifying community actions to address the harms within the prison system and policing system, and to strengthen community models of care and accountability.

Together, by building awareness and engagement with our communities, we can strengthen our work to bring justice and health equity in our communities across Ontario and beyond. Our communities need to be founded on connection, shared accountability, collective care and healing.

If there are no events happening in your community, we encourage you to watch the live streaming of the event in Toronto at Barbara Hall Park on August 10th. Stay tuned for more information.

Sincerely,

African Caribbean Council on HIV in Ontario (ACCHO)
Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH)
Ontario AIDS Network (OAN)
Prisoner’s HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN)
Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative (WHA)