

## **No One is Illegal Fredericton**

January 18, 2017

Matt DeCoursey, Member of Parliament, Fredericton  
494 Queen St., Suite 300  
Fredericton NB E3B 6J4

Dear Hon. Mr. DeCoursey

We last met on April 4, 2017, hand-delivering a letter to you about our concerns related to Canada's immigration policies. Refugees Welcome Fredericton is now a working group of No One Is Illegal Fredericton. No One Is Illegal is an organization that exists in other cities across Canada and is devoted to issues associated with migrant justice.

Since we spoke with you on that chilly April day outside your office, a number of developments have taken place. Over the course of 2016, there were three hunger strikes by immigration detainees in Lindsay and Toronto, Ontario detention centres, the largest taking place in July 2016, when over 50 detainees refused food. Detainees opposed indefinite detention, the fact that immigration detainees can be detained with no charges, and the conditions they endure while detained. Since 2000, fifteen people have died while in Canadian immigration detention; three people in 2016 alone.

The brave actions of those on hunger strike drew public, activist, and media attention to the continuing treatment of immigration detainees within Canada. Disappointingly, the federal government's response to these actions was the announcement of an additional \$138 million for new or existing detention facilities in Quebec and British Columbia. The response ignored the significant and troubling issues brought forward by immigration detainees and their supporters.

Given that the conditions associated with immigration detention in Canada are deeply troubling, we believe that it is important that the government first consider all alternatives to immigration detention. Through the current system, immigration detainees are jailed for weeks, months or even many years due to flaws with their identification, their status as "irregular arrivals" or simply put in prison as a secure holding place where they await deportation. Detention should be a last resort or a response to exceptional circumstances, not public policy. This sort of action runs counter to Canada's treatment of Canadian citizens or permanent residents. We believe that the government needs to weigh concerns regarding the deprivation of individual liberty for little (or no) gain. At its core, this treatment runs counter to the spirit of Canadian multicultural policy, social justice and is both fundamentally discriminatory and racist.

No One is Illegal Fredericton echoes the following changes demanded by

immigration detainees and their supporters across the country:

- An end to arbitrary and indefinite detention: If removal cannot happen within 90 days, immigration detainees must be released. Limits on detention periods are recommended by the United Nations, and are the law in the United States and the European Union.
- Release all migrant detainees who have been held for longer than 90 days
- No maximum security holds: Immigration detainees should not be held in maximum security provincial jails; must have access to basic services and be close to family members.
- Overhaul of the adjudication process: Give migrants fair and full access to judicial review, legal aid, bail programs and pro bono representation.

We understand that the government is reviewing the immigrant detention process. We would like to know the status of this review and ask that you support calls to end the inhumane detentions of immigrants and refugees.

We appreciate a response to our concerns by February 1, 2017, and will gladly meet with you to further discuss these urgent matters.

Sincerely,



Asaf Rashid



Kristi Allain



Tracy Glynn