

# **WEEK OF ONLINE ACTION**

## **#FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

### **NO MORE DEATHS IN PRISON**

**26 March to 3 April**

**twitter: @CAPExpansion**

**insta: @no\_more\_prisons**

**facebook: @capecampaignuk**



As the COVID-19 virus spreads and emergency preparations are made to mitigate the impact of this pandemic, the Government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, must take all necessary steps to protect incarcerated people across the UK. **The most comprehensive and effective COVID-19 prison mitigation plan is an immediate release of all people in prison.**

Prisons are by their very nature unsafe and unhealthy spaces in which access to health care is severely limited. Incarcerated people face systematic medical neglect and abuse every single day. This maltreatment will only increase during a pandemic.

As it stands, UK prisons are severely overcrowded and prison healthcare staff and facilities are overstretched. Furthermore, strict prison regulations make it nearly impossible for staff or incarcerated people to follow Public Health guidelines for controlling the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing, using hand sanitizer, etc. are all impossible measures.

UK prisons have alarmingly ideal conditions for the rapid spread of disease. As the [Health Affairs](#) journal states, "Prisons push people into the paths of epidemics". For reference, HIV and hepatitis C spread at much higher rates through populations in prison than through the non-incarcerated public ([Link](#)). **Simply put, prisons cannot cope with a COVID-19 outbreak ([Link](#)).**

There are approximately 85,000 people in prisons across the UK. Within this there is a significant population of ageing people in prison for which the virus will likely be life threatening. **Any death that results from COVID-19 spreading through the prison population is state sanctioned murder.** People in prison are not disposable and the 'punishment for their crimes' cannot be death. We are in the midst of a public health crisis; people in prison are members of the public and are therefore

On March 18th the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed at HMP Manchester ([Link](#)). As of yet HMPPS has failed to carry out any effective widespread testing within the prison population, meaning the actual number of cases is likely much higher than what is being reported. This failure to act has caused legitimate distress in prisons across the UK, including at Addiewell Prison in Scotland where an uprising began on March 24th as people inside have organized to demand effective action is taken to protect them from the spread of the virus.

In the last few days, all prison visitation has been suspended indefinitely ([Link](#)), and numerous prisons have gone into full lockdown. People inside have been completely cut off from their networks of support during a global pandemic - when community solidarity is vital for survival. Increased isolation during this time of crisis is gravely concerning. People on lockdown without phones in their cells have no opportunity to make calls to loved ones. Reduced staff at the Royal Mail and at Email a Prisoner, a company facilitating correspondence with those inside, has also limited much needed contact with loved ones. Social media is a vital way for people to maintain contact with and support loved ones on the inside, as is documented through the Instagram account [Blue Bag Life](#), but it isn't enough if the state continues to restrict outside contact.

Locking-down prisons is not the solution. It will not stop the spread of COVID-19, especially when prison staff are still entering the premises. We need a total release of all people in prisons, now!

**We have reached a unique point in time in which abolitionist demands are being discussed and implemented within the mainstream.** Counties across the United States are releasing people from jails and prisons to combat the spread of COVID-19. However, we need more than the mere 75 people who were released from [Rikers Island in NYC](#) and the 600 released in LA ([Link](#)). We need measures such as those seen in Iran, where 85,000 people were recently released from prison in an effort to stop the spread of the virus ([Link](#)). Now that the first case of COVID-19 in a UK prison has been announced, it is time for the UK Government to launch a mass release strategy in order to save lives ([Link](#)).

As CAPE, we believe the only definitive way of liberating people under the control of the prison industrial complex is the complete abolition of prisons, the police and the criminal justice system. As we build towards that future, we demand that the Government implement all the necessary public health procedures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. We have outlined these demands below.

## **We demand first and foremost the release of all people in prison and detention.**

### Specifically:

- We demand that all people currently on ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) are not brought back into prison.
- If release of all people in prison is staggered, we demand that the first to be released be those most vulnerable to COVID-19, such as the elderly, those who are pregnant, substance users and those who have pre-existing health conditions/compromised immune systems.

### Arrests and Court Rulings

- We demand an end to incarceration as a repercussion for crimes.
- We demand that all active trials be stopped.
- We demand that all courts be closed.
- We demand that probation appointments be halted and we demand an end to license breach recalls.

### Healthcare

- We demand that any people in prison be taken to hospital immediately upon exhibiting symptoms.
- We demand that free soap, masks, and necessarily hygienic facilities be available to all incarcerated people.
- We demand that all prison officers and medical staff be temperature checked before entering prison facilities, and both are required to wear gloves and face masks when interacting with people who are imprisoned.
- We demand free COVID-19 testing for anyone in prison that requests it.
- We demand that people in prison be given access to healthy and nutritious food

### Visitation

- We demand that visitation remains available as long as prison officers and prison staff are still entering the establishment.
- We demand that phone and video communication services are provided without cost to all people in prison.
- We demand that hygiene kits be available in visitation areas.

# **#FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

***ACTION ALERT***  
***ACTION ALERT***

***Day 1 of 7***  
***The Ministry of 'Justice'***

**#FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

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# ***Step 1***

**Call the Ministry of 'Justice'**

**Phone: 020 3334 3555**

**At the switchboard ask to speak with Phil Copple, Director General of Prisons.**

**“Hi I’m calling to ask for the immediate release of all those in prison and detention centres due to COVID-19. COVID-19 will disproportionately impact those who are most marginalized already - and today I am calling about the 85 000 people incarcerated in jails across the UK. People inside prisons are facing dire and inhumane conditions - no adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities, removal of visitation rights, and in many cases a full lock-down. Removing peoples’ only support systems during a time of global crisis and not providing them with any way to protect themselves from a pandemic is state violence, and will become state-sanctioned murder unless immediate action is taken. Release them all now!**

**#FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

# **Step 2**

## **Tweet at the Ministry of 'Justice'**

### **Suggested Tweets:**

**@MoJGovUK people in prison are not disposable! We are in the midst of a public health crisis, people in prison are members of the public and must not be forgotten. Release them all, NOW! #FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

**@MoJGovUK keeping people incarcerated with no adequate hygiene materials is state violence - this will become state-sanctioned murder unless you act now and release all people in prisons across the UK #FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

**There have been no attempts by the @MoJGovUK to support people in prison during #covid19 - cutting off visitation while allowing prison staff in will not help and is an inhumane non-solution #FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

**@MoJGovUK I stand with those on the inside & support their fight for survival during a global pandemic - release them all & in the meantime provide hygiene materials, free phone services & reinstate visitation rights #FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

**@MoGovUK how are people supposed to social distance in over-crowded prisons with no adequate sanitation facilities? You are refusing to respect the humanity of people in prisons - your inaction will function as a death sentence during #covid19 #FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

# **#FreeThemAll4PublicHealth**

# ***Step 3***

## **Email the Ministry of 'Justice'**

**This link will take you to a MoJ contact form:** <https://contact-moj.dsd.io/>

**1) Press 'Start Now'**

**2) You will reach a page that asks 'What are you contacting the Ministry of Justice about?' Write anything**

**3) Next it will ask: 'Do you still need to contact the MOJ?' Click YES**

**4) It will ask for a Full Name and Email Address. You can put any name and feel free to use the CAPE email: info@cape-campaign.org**

## **5) Copy and paste the below text into the message section:**

I am writing to express my deep concern about the health and safety of people inside prisons across the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous public health journals, grassroots groups, and activists have outlined why prisons are the worst possible places to prevent the spread of disease. Incarcerated people cannot self-isolate and prison regulations make hygiene and health practices next to impossible. The only reasonable comprehensive COVID-19 prison mitigate strategy is the immediate release of all people in prison and detention.

Prisons are by their very nature unsafe and unhealthy spaces in which access to health care is severely limited. Incarcerated people face systematic medical neglect, abuse and incredible isolation every day. This maltreatment will only increase during the COVID-19 pandemic.

UK prisons have alarmingly ideal conditions for the rapid spread of disease. As the Health Affairs journal states, "Prisons push people into the paths of epidemics". Simply put, prisons cannot cope with a COVID-19 outbreak.

There are approximately 85,000 people in prisons across the UK. Within this there is a significant population of ageing people in prison for which the virus will likely be life threatening. Any death that results from COVID-19 spreading through the prison population is state sanctioned murder. People in prison are not disposable and the 'punishment for their crimes' cannot be death. We are in the midst of a public health crisis, people in prison are also members of the general public and are therefore included in this public health crisis and must not be forgotten.

The only action to be taken that will adequately stop what will become a crisis of mass-death, is the immediate release of all people incarcerated and in detention across the UK. I stand with those on the inside in solidarity and am urging you to act now to prevent unnecessary suffering and death. Their blood will be on your hands.

**I demand first and foremost the release of all people in prison and detention.**

## **Specifically:**

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**Join us tomorrow for the next  
day of action...**

**Love and Rage!**



Community Action on  
Prison Expansion