



SUPPORT THE FIGHT
FOR FREEDOM

JOIN

DONATE

search

Press Room

[HOME](#) [ABOUT US](#) [ISSUES](#) [LEGAL](#) [LEGISLATION](#) [EDUCATION](#) [TAKE ACTION](#) [EVENTS](#) [SUPPORT](#)

[Home](#) > [About Us](#) > [Press Room](#) > [ACLU-CT Condemns Inhumane Force-Feeding](#)



ACLU-CT CONDEMNS DOC ESCALATION OF INHUMANE FORCE-FEEDING

U.N. Torture Expert Should Investigate Brutal Force-Feeding Of Connecticut Inmate, Says ACLU (10/27/2008)

Treatment Could Violate International Human Rights Laws

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Andrew Schneider (860) 247-9823 x 219

Rachel Myers, (212) 549-2666; media@aclu.org

HARTFORD, CT – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture (UNSR) should review the force-feeding of inmate Bill Coleman by the Connecticut Department of Corrections (DOC), according to a letter filed today by the American Civil Liberties Union under the U.N. Urgent Appeal procedure.

"The ACLU believes this violent procedure warrants serious investigation from the United Nations. The DOC has violated Mr. Coleman's human rights, his right to deny medical treatment and his right to political protest," said Andrew Schneider, Executive Director of the ACLU of Connecticut.

Connecticut inmate Bill Coleman has been force-fed through an IV at least 10 times since September 22. Force-feeding is universally considered cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment that in some cases could be considered torture in violation of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, according to the letter. It is also considered unethical by the World Medical Association, which includes the American Medical Association.

On October 21, DOC officials moved Coleman to MacDougall Correctional Institution and isolated him from the other inmates without giving any reason why he was moved or placed in isolation. On October 23, he was ordered to visit the infirmary, where he was put in four-point restraint. A nasogastric tube was forcibly inserted through his nose but had to be removed when a kink in the tube got caught in his nasal passage.

"I could feel it going down my throat and into my stomach. I was gagging, choking and vomiting," said Coleman.

Contrary to prior practice with Coleman, Dr. Edward Blanchette, Clinical Director of the DOC, turned off two cameras being used to tape the procedure immediately before inserting the tubes and turned the cameras back on only after the tubes had been removed and the room had been cleaned. Since the tubes were removed after force-feeding Coleman, the DOC could repeat the inhumane procedure of inserting the tubes again and again.

"Brutally force-feeding Bill Coleman in direct opposition to his wishes violates his basic human rights and international standards of humane treatment, in addition to violating his right to make a political statement by refusing food," said Jamil Dakwar, Director of the ACLU Human Rights Program. "We are hopeful that the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture will review Mr. Coleman's treatment and make suggestions to fix it. The Connecticut Department of Corrections should take immediate steps to implement any changes recommended by the Special Rapporteur to ensure that Mr. Coleman's rights are restored."

Coleman is protesting in the form of a hunger strike what he believes is Connecticut's corrupt judicial system. Coleman has been deemed competent and has a living will, executed on a DOC form, which explicitly states that he is not to be resuscitated or force-fed.

The ACLU's letter urges the UNSR to review the DOC's treatment of Coleman, advise the government to stop force-feeding him and immediately allow an independent health professional to monitor the conditions of Coleman's hunger strike. In addition to appealing to the U.N., the ACLU of Connecticut will be in Connecticut Superior Court in January to ask that court to block the DOC from force-feeding Coleman.

The ACLU's letter is available online here: www.aclu.org/intlhumanrights/gen/373861q120081023.html

William Murray of Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP is cooperating counsel for the ACLU of Connecticut.

[Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [About This Site](#) | ©1997-2008 All Rights Reserved
ACLU-CT · 32 Grand Street · Hartford, CT 06106 · 860-247-9823