

# Thoughts on the January 6<sup>th</sup> Prisoners

As we celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and our nation's birthday, I would like us to be grateful to God for the privilege we have to live in America. In light of that I want us to remember those citizens, even in our own country, who do not enjoy the protections and rights guaranteed to them by our Constitution as they should.

In this newsletter I want to discuss the circumstances of the prisoners in being held in jail due to their actions committed on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at the protest at the U.S. Capitol.

I am not going to discuss the 2020 election process, the actions of President Trump, or the actions and the crimes that occurred on that day. The charges are serious that have been and are being investigated and tried in court proceedings. Not the worst crimes but serious nonetheless. If found guilty the appropriate sentence according to the law should be issued and carried out. This what should be done.

My concern is about the treatment these prisoners are receiving while they are in prison in the Washington D.C. jail awaiting trial and/or serving sentence. In many cases their treatment is way out of proportion to the crimes for which they have been arrested and/or convicted.

Furthermore, reports have leaked out that have raised substantial questions regarding the absolutely tortuous squalor and cruel, abusive, and unconscionable living conditions imposed on some of these prisoners and whether the rights of prisoners under our law have been denied and whether even the most basic care needs of human beings are being withheld.

What we are hearing is that living in this jail is like living in a third world country because the conditions are so appalling. January 6<sup>th</sup> prisoners are suffering mental, physical, social, legal, and spiritual abuse, which has led some to suffer permanent mental and psychological damage.

Here are the conditions being reported:

- Prisoners being held in solitary confinement for 23 to 24 hours a day.
- Prisoners being held in undersized cells for long periods of time.

- Prisoners kept in jail with lights on for 24 hours a day.
- Prisoners in squalid and filthy living conditions with excessive heat, mold-covered walls, floors, vents, and showers, broken sinks and toilets, cockroaches and mice, black sewage flies in cells and showers, raw sewage overflowing into cells, rusty pipes and desks, lead paint inside cells, etc. all in violation of federal law.
- Prisoners inflicted with violent physical abuse consisting of random handcuffing and beating, use of shackles, pepper spray in the face, face slamming on the concrete floors of the jail, body banging on the jail walls, stripped naked and left in jail cell, etc. Resulting in a blind eye, a detached retina in an eye, a fractured skull, broken finger, knocked out tooth.
- Denial of proper medical care for these injuries and other major and minor health issues. This caused one prisoner's cancer condition to severely deteriorate from stage 1 to stage 3.
- Prisoners suffering from starvation, weakness, nausea, malnutrition, hair loss, eye loss, scurvy and other nutritional deficiencies.
- Prisoners given small and insufficient food portions, food all the same, and dirty, even black, water, having to filter it through a sock to be able to drink it.
- Prisoners denied showers, being able to shave or get a haircut unless they take the COVID shot.
- Prisoners experiencing severe isolation, threats and agonizing verbal harassment, racial discrimination and religious discrimination.
- Prisoners denied religious services.
- Prisoners' complaints met with retaliatory beatings.
- Prisoners being denied proper communications with family, friends, and their attorney unless they take the COVID shot.
- Prisoners denied the right to video evidence impacting their cases and having their legal documents confiscated. The right to an attorney and to evidence for your case are basic legal rights of all Americans who are arrested. Prisoners also denied the right in some cases to cross-examine witnesses during trial, another common legal procedure.

January 6<sup>th</sup> prisoners have been forced to endure jail conditions for a period of time totally inappropriate based on the charges made when they were arrested and sentences handed down compared to others who committed the same crimes.

I have no problem with prisoners convicted of crimes serving the sentences appropriate to their crimes, which should be similar to any other person convicted of the same crimes.

But these prisoners have been set apart for unusually cruel, abusive, and unconscionable torture that clearly violate the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment and federal law requirements for protecting prisoner rights and meeting the basic humanitarian care needs of prisoners. This should never be happening in the United States of America.

They are experiencing conditions far worse than murderers and rapists endure in our jails in America. These conditions rival those of the concentration camps of WW2, the gulags of the former Soviet Union, the re-education camps of Communist China, and the death camps of North Korea. This should never be happening in America.

It doesn't matter what your political affiliation, you should be adamantly opposed to such treatment as it violates the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

These prisoners have requested transfer to Guantanamo Bay which holds the most violent terrorists in the world because prison conditions are far better there than in the Washington, D.C. jail where they are housed.

Journalists and members of Congress have been denied access to the jail to inspect it and investigate the reports we have heard.

We need to stand up and speak out regarding this injustice. If my rights were being denied like this, I would want someone to stand up for me.

I am reminded of the confessional that originated from German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoller about injustices that happened during World War 2:

“First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out  
- Because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out  
— Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out  
— Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out  
— Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak out  
- Because I was not a Catholic.  
Then they came for me  
– And there was no one left to speak out for me.”

We need to speak out because even though it's not us today, it could be us tomorrow.

Feel free to contact me with ideas, thoughts, and concerns. My phone is 319-987-3021 or you can email me at [sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov) . I want to hear what you are thinking and will listen to your input. Together we will work to make a difference for the future of Iowa. Thank you very much for the honor of representing you!

Sincerely,

***Sandy***