

## **“Security/Welfare Checks” - UPDATES and CONTINUED CALL FOR LETTERS**

**October 14, 2016**

*from the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition (PHSS) Committee to End Sleep Deprivation*

Guards are jarringly waking prisoners in solitary confinement every 30 minutes in the name of “security/welfare checks” throughout all CA prisons' isolation units. Loudly disturbing and waking people every 30 minutes is serious, ongoing sleep deprivation, a debilitating, internationally-condemned form of torture. These “security/welfare checks,” purported to be for 'suicide prevention,' are being used as a blanket practice, whether prisoners are suicidal or not, and despite the fact that denial of sleep is devastating for the human mind and body.

We know that the “checks” began in Central CA Women's Facility (CCWF) Condemned Units on May 18, 2014 and in Pelican Bay State Prison Security Housing Units (PB SHU) on August 2, 2015, despite the fact that suicide rates are low in those units; none in over 20 years and one in 11 years, respectively. Considering the harm and agony of sleep deprivation, the effects of these checks run counter to their purported purpose. Sleep expert Zeitzer and psychiatrist Kupers concluded people suffering from them may be at a higher suicide risk than *before* these checks began.

Our Committee to End Sleep Deprivation has received a flood of letters from people enduring the checks in California's SHU's, Ad Seg, and Psychiatric Units, explaining their suffering and trauma. Letters have come from Calipatria State Prison, CCI Tehachapi, CCWF, CA Institution for Men, CSP Corcoran, Deuel Vocational Institution, CSP Sacramento (“New Folsom”), High Desert State Prison, Pelican Bay State Prison, SATF Corcoran, and Salinas Valley State Prison.

We believe **Lindsay Hayes**, the suicide expert, and **Matthew Lopes**, the Special Master charged with overseeing prison reform and compliance concerning care of seriously mentally ill inmates under *Coleman v. Gov of California*, could stop these “security/ welfare checks,” but they have ignored the hundreds of letters our committee has generated from prisoners, mental health experts, and concerned individuals protesting that the checks cause sleep deprivation torture.

If you are suffering from “security/welfare checks,” please write Lindsay Hayes. Explain how the checks are affecting you and what you think true mental health and suicide prevention would entail. If you experienced the checks and are now out of solitary, please send a letter about how they affected you.

**Either send a copy of your letter to all three of the below addresses or, if it's easier, send one letter to the PHSS Committee and we will forward it to the suicide expert (Hayes) and the Special Master (Lopes).**

We understand that if you are sleep deprived, it is difficult to focus and write.

Hayes and Lopes have received many letters since we directed people to contact them. We also have forwarded many of the letters to *Coleman* Attorney Michael Bien who should be protecting prisoners from this harmful practice rather than supporting it.

The Committee has also recently contacted federal Receiver J. Clark Kelso, responsible for bringing medical care in CA prisons to a standard which no longer violates the U.S. Constitution (*Plata v. Brown*), about the medical affects of the checks. Keeping someone awake 24 hours a day, or jarring them 40-48 times a day with loud metal on metal noises, stomping, beepers, and flashlights in their face not only torments the mind, but has severe adverse effects on the body.

Disrupted sleep, or sleep deprivation, causes and increases the risk of serious, even fatal, illnesses. Many prisoners tell us that when they see prison medical or psychiatric staff about the effects of the checks, they are told " You really need some sleep." These "security/welfare checks" serve no welfare or security purpose; they're only *causing* serious psychological and physical harm. They need to stop. Sleep deprivation is torture.

Organizations and individuals *not* in prison, please write Lindsay Hayes who claims these "checks" are suicide prevention, and urge him to stop this harmful practice. Share with him the voices of the people suffering from the checks. Find instructions, sample letters, quotes from prisoners suffering the checks, articles, expert reports, and more @ <https://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com> under the "Sleep Deprivation" **tab**. If you have professional or personal experience with mental health issues, medical healthcare, suicide prevention, counseling, sleep disorders, or surviving torture and trauma, please share your specialized understandings of the necessity of sleep and the effects of sleep disruption/deprivation.

Find **quotes from prisoners** suffering the checks at <http://wp.me/P1BB1k-2QN> and The American Public Health Association's letter opposing the checks at <http://wp.me/P1BB1k-27L>.

If you are able, please send your letter to all three of the following addresses:

**Mr. Lindsay M. Hayes**

40 Lantern Lane  
Mansfield, MA 02048

**Matthew A. Lopes Jr.**

Pannone Lopes Devereaux & West LLC  
317 Iron Horse Way, Suite 301  
Providence, RI 02908

**PHSS Committee to End Sleep Deprivation**

P.O. Box 5692  
Eureka, CA 95502

We will work to end the sleep deprivation torture until the "security/welfare checks" stop. For more info, contact us at [510.426.5322](tel:510.426.5322), [phssreachingout@gmail.com](mailto:phssreachingout@gmail.com), or our mailing address above.