

Wisconsin Prison authorities keep hunger strikers on brink of death

Special to Workers World
from Waupun, Wis.

9/8/16

August 22 — According to a letter from hunger striker LaRon McKinley, the “Dying to Live” hunger strike in Waupun Correctional Institution, which began June 5, has reached a crisis.

On Aug. 15, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WI DOC) decided to suspend the force-feeding they had subjected the prisoners to since June 17. They allowed McKinley and Cesar DeLeon — the two of the six hunger strikers who have taken the struggle the furthest, to go without food or water for 72 hours, until they were severely dehydrated. Then they tube-fed them again.

“Presently, and for most of this week, we have been under retaliatory attack by our warden as a direct consequence of our political efforts ... to force an end to prolonged Administrative Confinement,” McKinley stated.

On Aug. 13, a coalition of prisoner supporters from across the state gathered in Waupun to protest WI DOC practices and



Aug. 13. Supporters of hunger strikers at Waupun prison in Wisconsin.

WW PHOTO

fatal condition called refeeding syndrome. WI DOC has begun a regimen that is very likely to cause refeeding syndrome.

According to The BMJ (formerly the British Medical Journal), “Refeeding syndrome can be defined as the potentially fatal

shifts in fluids and electrolytes that may occur in malnourished patients receiving artificial refeeding.” Refeeding syndrome can cause heart or respiratory failure.

In Waupun, WI DOC only allows the prisoners to drink lead-polluted water available to the 165-year-old institution, which causes diarrhea and exacerbates their dehydration.

McKinley suspects WI DOC is intentionally keeping them on the brink of death. According to his letter, after 42 hours without food or water — because they refused to drink Waupun’s polluted water — McKinley and DeLeon, “were di-

agnosed as seriously dehydrated, and the tube-feeding was then recommended, but this time they made us both go exactly 30 more hours, to exactly 72 hours each. Seventy-two hours without water is a well-known and medically held time limit that would and is generally believed to kill most people.”

The hunger strikers believe Waupun staff will continue force-feeding them every 72 hours in an effort to make the hunger strike as unbearable as possible. McKinley goes on to describe his body’s response, which mirrors the symptoms of refeeding syndrome: “Due to the stress and ordeal that our bodies had gone through, they kind of reacted as if they had been poisoned when said fluids were eventually forced into the stomach.”

Outside supporters are demanding that the DOC allow McKinley and DeLeon to drink bottled water, and that Wisconsin meet the strikers’ central demand: a one-year halt to any form of solitary confinement. They are asking people to contact Warden Foster, WI DOC Secretary Jon Litscher, and Gov. Scott Walker.

More information, including phone numbers and email addresses, can be found at SolitaryTorture.blogspot.com. □