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Stark Raven Digest: March 2, 2009  
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The Stark Raven Media Collective takes a critical look at prisons and issues of criminalization.

Podcast, News Highlights, More Info: <http://www.prisonjustice.ca>

To join our email list & receive this monthly digest or to be removed from the list, email [starkraven\(at\)prisonjustice\(dot\)ca](mailto:starkraven(at)prisonjustice(dot)ca)

The digest is now available as a PDF on our website:
http://www.prisonjustice.ca/organizations/stark_raven.html

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The below email contains:  
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== c u r r e n t i s s u e s ==

- a) Where has the digest been? Stark Raven is recruiting!
- b) Upcoming Radio Programs
- c) Recent Audio & Podcasts
- d) Recent Prison News

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- e) How to Podcast Stark Raven
- f) More Info on Stark Raven
- g) Support Stark Raven: Become a Member of Co-op Radio

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Where has the digest been?  
Stark Raven is recruiting!  
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As you may have noticed, the Stark Raven digest hasn't come out for the last couple of months. One reason for this is that we need help!

Stark Raven is growing (podcasting, website, correspondence with prisoners) and we are looking for more people to help out and get involved.

Are you passionate and interested in...

...critically engaging in ideas around justice and criminalization? ...helping get prisoner's and ex-prisoner's voices on the air?
...developing your writing, media and website skills?
...organizing and analyzing information and ideas and sharing them with others?
...solidifying your skepticism about prisons as a way to deal with health and social issues and want to explore why, and what the alternatives are?

Stark Raven is looking for new members to contribute to producing the radio program and developing the website.

These are some the options:

- *news research & writing for radio
- *researching subjects and people to interview
- *doing on-air interviews
- *contributing your radio interviews to the program
- *compiling community events
- *editing audio
- *helping organize music for the show
- *prisonjustice.ca website work (uploading news, updating info)
- *work on overhauling the website to drupal
- *editing, organizing and uploading the podcast
- *outreach work to prisoners -- writing letters, ads in prisoner newsletters etc
- *community event organizing
- *new ideas welcome!

Interested or want more info? Email us at starkraven(at)prisonjustice(dot)ca or call 604-682-3269 x3019.

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Upcoming Stark Raven Radio Programs  
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*Mon March 2, 7-8 pm: FRAGILE RIGHTS: THE EROSION OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THE NAME OF NATIONAL SECURITY. Maher Arar's talk from a Feb 12th forum in Vancouver.

*Mon March 9, 7-8 pm: MORE EXPANSION OF WOMEN'S PRISONS
Betty Krawzwyk on the expansion of Alouette Correctional Centre for Women.

*Mon March 16, 7-8 pm: DRUGS, GANGS and KNEE-JERKS REACTIONS. What would decriminalization and legalization of drugs actually look like?

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Recent Stark Raven Audio Interviews  
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Links to download and listen to recent interviews:
(always available at <http://www.prisonjustice.ca>)

== Feb 16: THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HIV ==
Interview with Michael Vonn, Policy Director, BC Civil Liberties Association.
<http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/stark-raven-prison-justice/criminalization-hiv>

== Feb 2: DOING TIME: LEISURE AND INCARCERATION ==
How can you have agency in an environment structured on institutional control? Leisure education is one way prisoners are using to help them discover and assert agency and choice behind bars. Interview with Alison Link on her work with prisoners around issues of leisure.
<http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/stark-raven-prison-justice/doing-time-leisure-and-incarceration>

== Jan 19: CLOSING GUANTANAMO ==
Clips from the Cageprisoners speaking tour Two Sides, One Story that is marking seven years of unlawful detention, abuse and torture at the US-run prison.
<http://www.radio4all.net/index.php/program/31219>

== Jan 12: SECRET TRIALS IN CANADA ==
*Interview with Matthew Behrens, from the Campaign to Stop Secret Trials in Canada on the five Muslim men who continue to be detained under extremely strict bail conditions, without charge, and without being able to see the evidence against them. Includes updates on the last jailed detainee (Hassan Almrei) being released on bail, CSIS recording lawyer-client phone calls and the court cases.
<http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/stark-raven-prison-justice/national-security-certificates-and-fight-against-secret-tr>

*Focus on Security Certificate detainee Adil Charkaoui and his court case.
<http://fsrn.org/node/3770>

== Dec 15: SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN PRISON ==
*Interview with TJ Parsell, author of Fish: A Memoir of a Boy in a Man's Prison that documents his survival of rape inside prison. TJ also works with the organization Stop Prisoner Rape. (from the Stark Raven Archives, recorded in June 2007)
<http://www.radio4all.net/index.php/program/31271>

*Documentary a Thousand Kites, a coalition of activists who are using the arts to fight for change in the US criminal justice system. Hear the Documentary.
<http://www.radioproject.org/archive/2008/2508.html>

== Nov 17: THE DANGEROUS STATE OF HEALTHCARE IN PRISON ==
One woman's story of medical neglect in a BC jail.
<http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/stark-raven-prison-justice/woman-sues-over-medical-neglect-bc-jail>

== Nov 10: CREATING CRIMINALS IN A MARKET SOCIETY==

Interview with Vivien Stern, author of *Creating Criminals: Prisons and People in a Market Society*, on the impact of neoliberal economic policies on our concepts of what constitutes "crime".

<http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/stark-raven-prison-justice/creating-criminals-prisons-people-market-society>

== Nov 3: EDUCATION IN PRISON==

After cutting successful post-secondary programs and putting resources into risk management, the state of education in Canadian prisons gets a failing grade. Three interviews on the history and current realities of the state of education behind bars. <http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/stark-raven-prison-justice/learning-behind-bars>

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Recent Prison News

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~written and compiled by members of the Stark Raven Media Collective~

[note: We won't be producing news for the next little while, as we focus our energy on recruitment and on our website overhaul project. But we are always open to having you (!) help produce the news and keep the under-reported and non-sensationalized criminal justice news a' flowing! Email us if you are interested in getting involved.]

Some highlights from Nov, Dec and Jan.

== Canadian News ==

- 1) Women lose final bid to keep minimum-security prison open
 - 2) Increasing number of prisoners are female, Aboriginal
 - 3) Women file lawsuit over canceled mother-baby program
 - 4) BCCLA calls for return of mother-child program
 - 5) Sex workers fighting criminalization lose court case
 - 6) Pivot call for private security ban
 - 7) Security certificate detainee says jail is better than strict house arrest
 - 8) Canada's security certificate regime is expensive
 - 9) Protest demands release of imprisoned Native leader
 - 10) Court rules Charter doesn't apply to Afghan prisoners
 - 11) Saskatchewan keeps man in jail 4 months after sentence expires
 - 12) fall convention calls for more tough on crime laws
- Tories

== US & International News ==

- 13) Top medical officer quits over physicians' involvement with death penalty
- 14) Top Guantanamo judges admits prisoners are tortured
- 15) New US administration plans to close Guantanamo

- 16) US has held 12 youth at Guantanamo
- 17) Alabama sheriff jailed for making money off of starving prisoners 18) Conrad Black criticizes the prison industrial complex from his jail cell
- 19) Peace activists call for release of young Israeli refuseniks
- 20) Hundreds of Palestinians detained during attack on Gaza
- 21) Burma hands down harsh sentences to Saffron Revolution organizers

1) WOMEN LOSE FINAL BID TO KEEP MINIMUM-SECURITY PRISON OPEN

----- Jan 2009

Those being held in Canada's only minimum-security prison for women have lost their two-year legal battle to keep the jail open.

In September, the Court of Appeal for Ontario ruled that the women's rights would not be violated by moving them to a multi-level prison like Grand Valley in Kitchener.

The women appealed that ruling to the Supreme Court of Canada. Last month the court said that they would not hear their appeal.

In response to the ruling, the Correctional Service of Canada has transferred the women from the prison.

The Correctional Service of Canada says the minimum-security Isabel McNeill House in Kingston, Ontario is too expensive to operate.

The women argue that the closure violates their constitutional rights.

This is because in a multi-level prison they would be treated essentially the same as prisoners classified as medium security.

Unlike the Isabel McNeill House, the multi-level prisons are surrounded by razor wire fences and women are under the constant surveillance of cameras.

There are 13 stand-alone men's minimum-security prisons across the country. There are now none for women.

The Correctional Service of Canada could not say what they will ultimately do with the site. It is a prime piece of real estate located across the street from the former Prison for Women. The Prison for Women was recently sold to Queen's University.

<http://www.thewhig.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=1374170>

<http://www.thewhig.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=1368184>

2) INCREASING NUMBER OF PRISONERS ARE FEMALE, ABORIGINAL

----- Jan 2009

An increasing number of prisoners in Canada are female and aboriginal.

A recent StatsCan report found that while women still make up only a small percentage of the largely male prison population, the number of female prisoners continues to increase.

For example, in the last five years there has been a 30 per cent increase in the number of women admitted to remand, meaning those jailed while awaiting trial.

The increase of women in prison is a worldwide trend. The majority of women continue to be incarcerated for non-violent crimes that related to poverty and addiction.

There is also an increasing number of women who are being sentenced, not for a criminal charge, but for breach of probation.

The StatsCan report also found that twenty percent of adults in prison are aboriginal.

This while, Aboriginal people make up only four percent of the overall population.

The number of prisoners at federal prisons, where those convicted of sentences two years or longer are incarcerated, has grown steadily in the past decade.

The report also found that overall more adults are incarcerated in the provincial system while awaiting a trial or sentencing, but fewer are being housed there to serve a sentence.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2008/12/15/statscan-prisons.html>

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2008010/article/10732-eng.htm#a12>

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/national/story.html?id=1078155>

3) WOMEN FILE LAWSUIT OVER CANCELLED MOTHER-BABY PROGRAM

----- Dec 2008

Five women and two babies are taking BC Corrections to court. The women are former and current prisoners of Alouette Correctional Centre For Women in Maple Ridge, BC. They want the jail to bring back the mother and baby program, which was quietly cancelled in April 2008.

Geoffrey Cowper is a Vancouver lawyer representing the women. He has filed a writ in BC Supreme Court stating these women have a constitutional right to stay to stay with their babies. He says the Charter of Rights and Freedoms states every individual has the right to security of the person. He says the babies also have a right to stay with their moms under the UN Declaration of the Child.

Before the program was cancelled, mothers who gave birth while serving time would have the opportunity to keep their babies with them. Now, babies are taken away and either put into foster care or given to a relative.

One of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit has opted for a longer sentence to keep her baby. She's been transferred to the federal prison where the mother and baby program still exists.

<http://www2.canada.com/theprovince/news/story.html?id=323438f9-255e-48de-9e01-7b9e0b90e68a>

http://podcast.cbc.ca/mp3/bcearlyedition_20081119_9334.mp3

<http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/2008/200811/20081126.html>

4) BCCLA CALLS FOR RETURN OF MOTHER-CHILD PROGRAM

----- Jan 2009

The BC Civil Liberties Association is calling on the provincial government to re-instate the mother-child program at the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women in Maple Ridge.

In a recently released position paper on child apprehensions in BC jails, the BCCLA called the cancellation of the program unacceptable.

They argue that apprehending newborns from female prisoners causes serious harm to the child's psychological and emotional development and profound psychological stress to the parent.

In addition, these harms disproportionately affect Aboriginal women and children because of the over-representation of Aboriginal women in Canadian prisons.

They are calling on the Solicitor General and Minister for Children and Family Development to bring the program back.

<http://www.bccla.org/05prisoners.htm>

5) SEX WORKERS FIGHTING CRIMINALIZATION LOSE COURT CASE

----- Jan 2009

A B.C. Supreme Court judge has ruled that a group of street-based sex workers from the Downtown Eastside will not be permitted to challenge the constitutionality of the laws that criminalize them.

The case was brought forth by the Downtown Eastside Sex Workers United Against Violence Society. They are a non-profit society composed of active sex workers, and Sheryl Kiselbach, a former sex worker with 30 years of experience in the sex industry.

The judgment held that the plaintiffs did have the legal right to initiate such a challenge, and that it must be brought by an individual, active sex worker.

He rejected the argument that the highly public nature of the court process effectively prohibits active sex workers from launching a challenge due to fears of arrest, retaliation, and discrimination against themselves and their families.

Former sex worker Sheryl Kiselbach says that it is ridiculous that 30 years of experience in sex work, including criminal convictions, is not enough to give her the right to challenge the prostitution laws. She says that it would have been impossible for me while working in the trade.

The plaintiffs and their lawyers will be reviewing the judgment and considering their next steps.

<http://www.pivotlegal.org/News/08-12-16--sexworkchallenge.html>

6) PIVOT CALL FOR PRIVATE SECURITY BAN

----- Dec 2008

The Pivot Legal Society is calling for a ban on private security patrols in public space.

They want the City of Vancouver to stop funding to Business Improvement Associations to pay for private security guards.

Business Improvement Associations spend more than \$1.8 million dollars a year on private security.

Pivot is asking for that money to be redirected into outreach and support services for homeless people.

Pivot's new report "Security before Justice" finds that the poorer you are, the more likely you are to be interrogated, harassed or experience violence at the hands of private security guards.

Public funding for private security amounts to nearly \$100 a month per homeless person. Pivot argues that that money could be directed to rent supplements to help people secure affordable housing.

<http://www.pivotlegal.org>

7) SECURITY CERTIFICATE DETAINEE SAYS JAIL IS BETTER THAN STRICT HOUSE ARREST

----- Dec 2008

A national security certificate detainee is asking to be sent back to jail.

He says he can no longer handle the stress created by the constant surveillance that are part of his bail conditions.

Mohammad Mahjoub has been held under a national security certificate for more than six years.

Mr. Mahjoub was released last year on bail, under extremely strict conditions.

He says he can no longer handle the 24-hour surveillance the federal government has him under.

Officials says they won't send him to jail because he hasn't committed a crime, nor has he breached a judge's order.

His conditions include being electronically monitored inside his house. When he leaves, federal agents follow him and take photos.

The photos, along with every piece of mail are scanned and archived in a government database.

A policy of "eyes on" tracking by federal agents is disrupting his family life and privacy. Recently, Mr. Mahjoub's wife, Mona El Fouli, testified that her recent miscarriage became a matter of federal scrutiny. She says every day brings a new stress that can make life difficult for them and their kids.

Mr. Mahjoub is willing to go back to jail even though he contracted hepatitis C while behind bars.

Mr. Mahjoub is also pleading his case for an easing of the bail conditions in court.

Under immigration law, national security certificates allow the government to hold non-citizens indefinitely. Neither the accused nor their lawyer are allowed to see the evidence against them.

None of the 5 muslim men who are being held under security certificates have been convicted of any crime.

<http://www.justiceforharkat.com/news.php?extend.3047>
<http://www.justiceforharkat.com/news.php?extend.3035>

8) CANADA'S SECURITY CERTIFICATE REGIME IS EXPENSIVE

----- Dec 2008

The surveillance of one national security certificate detainee costs between \$500,000 to \$1-million a year.

This is for round-the-clock monitoring, including staffing costs, electronic bracelets, cars, gas and overtime.

This does not include the government's legal costs for all the courts cases in the past 8 years.

Four security-certificate detainees are under extremely strict forms of house arrest.

Canada Border Services Agency officials watch their every move, including following them on foot.

A fifth security-certificate detainee, Hassan Almrei, remains jailed in a specially built prison in Kingston.

The new prison in which he is the only detainee, costs \$2.6-million to run each year.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20081116.wsuspects1117/BNStory/National/home>

9) PROTEST DEMANDS RELEASE OF IMPRISONED NATIVE LEADER

----- Jan 2009

About two dozen supporters staged a protest outside Quebec Premier Jean Charest's office last week to demand the release of an imprisoned native leader.

Traditional chief Benjamin Nottaway was sentenced last month to 45 days in jail for his role in native protests that blocked part of a highway outside the Barriere Lake reserve.

The impoverished reserve is about 300 kilometres north of Ottawa and has been involved in a land battle with the federal government for two decades.

Residents say that the Canadian government is not living up to its part of a sustainability agreement that governs their traditional territory.

The latest battle erupted over a decision by Indian Affairs to impose a new chief, despite opposition from the community.

Witnesses allege that Quebec riot squads used excessive physical force in the protests, tear-gassing a crowd that included children and elders.

More than 40 people of a community of 450 received criminal charges from the blockade.

<http://www.cbc.ca/cp/national/090108/n010870A.html>

<http://www.ottawaxpress.ca/news/news.aspx?iIDArticle=16391>

<http://sumoud.tao.ca/?q=node/view/1167>

<http://www.barrierelakesolidarity.blogspot.com>

10) COURT RULES CHARTER DOESN'T APPLY TO AFGHAN PRISONERS

----- Jan 2009

The Federal Court of Appeal has upheld a ruling that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not apply to the actions of Canadian soldiers who handle prisoners apprehended in Afghanistan.

The courts of a number of other countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, have recognized that their constitutional and national human rights protections do extend to the actions of their military personnel when operating abroad.

One of the reasons the court gave for its decision was based on the fact that the prisoners are not Canadian citizens and hence the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not apply. The Federal Court of Appeal also held that the Charter cannot prevent the Canadian Forces from transferring prisoners to a serious risk of torture.

The BC Civil Liberties Association, along with Amnesty international have expressed their dismay at this decision. The appeal decision comes as part of a case launched by the two organizations in February 2007. They were seeking a court order to prohibit the military from transferring prisoners into the Afghan custody because of the serious risk they will be tortured.

The two groups are planning to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

<http://bccla.org/>

11) SASKATCHEWAN KEEPS MAN IN JAIL 4 MONTHS AFTER SENTENCE EXPIRES ----- Nov 2008

The Saskatchewan government has apologized to a man who was supposed to spend 45 days in jail, but instead spent six months locked up.

19 year old Kyle Dufresne, from the Joseph Bighead First Nation, was sentenced to serve a month and a half in jail for breaching his probation.

Instead, Dufresne spent an extra four and a half months in jail.

He said he tried to tell guards and case workers there was a mistake, but no one would listen to him.

Saskatchewan Corrections, Public Safety and Policing Minister Daryl Hickie apologized to Dufresne in the Saskatchewan legislature.

Hickie says the ministry will be conducting a review to find out how this happened.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/saskatchewan/story/2008/10/30/hickie-apology.html>

12) TORY CONVENTION CALLS FOR MORE TOUGH ON CRIME LAWS ----- Nov 2008

The Tories have wrapped up their policy convention with more tough on crime initiatives and a general move to the right.

Delegates approved a new policy of repealing the "faint hope" clause. This removes the possibility of parole before 25 years for those sentenced to life in prison.

They also want it to be automatic that after three violent offences, people are designated as a dangerous offender, and have a mandatory life sentence. This is similar to the "three-strikes" regime in the United States.

One of the most controversial motions was the issue of making it a crime to harm an unborn child during an attack on the mother. This passed narrowly despite warnings the move will reopen the abortion debate.

The resolutions passed by the 2000 delegates are not binding on the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper but do indicate the policies of the Conservative Party.

These tough on crime initiatives are in addition to the ones the Tories promised during their election campaign.

These include making it easier to sentence people as young as 14 to longer sentences, including life in prison.

The Tories also want reduce the use of conditional sentencing, commonly known as house arrest, despite evidence that conditional sentencing is more effective and cheaper than jail.

Harper originally said these tough on crime bills would be considered confidence motions, but has changed his tone to a more conciliatory one.

The economy appears to be the priority and that the new tough on crime measures won't be introduced until the new year.

It isn't clear at this point whether the Tories will reintroduce several tough on crime bills that failed to pass in the last session. These include bills to impose mandatory minimum sentences for certain drug crimes and longer sentences for car theft.

<http://www.news1130.com/news/national/article.jsp?content=n111646A>

<http://www.thestar.com/News/Canada/article/537831>

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/national/story.html?id=adfc510d-6be8-4f4b-9092-5c0e80ofcc9d>

13) TOP MEDICAL OFFICER QUILTS OVER PHYSICIANS INVOLVEMENT WITH DEATH PENALTY

----- Jan 2009

The top medical officer in the Washington state Department of Corrections has resigned, saying that the use of staff members to prepare for an execution is unethical.

Dr. Marc Stern said the American Medical Association and Society of Correctional Physicians oppose physician involvement in executions, and they oppose physicians supervising anybody who is involved in executions.

The state of Washington had been set to execute Darold Ray Stenson last month, but the execution has been postponed.

<http://www.democracynow.org/2008/12/30/headlines#16>

14) TOP GUANTANAMO JUDGES ADMITS PRISONERS ARE TORTURED

----- Jan 2009

In an extraordinary public declaration, the top judge overseeing the military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay admits that prisoners at Guantanamo have been tortured. She also says that the torture was carried out in accordance with an official policy set in Washington.

Susan Crawford says that prisoner Mohammed al-Qahtani, described by US officials as "the 20th hijacker", had been so systematically abused that he was in a life-threatening condition.

Qahtani was held in isolation, repeatedly strip-searched, frequently with female agents involved, forced to wear women's underclothes and a dog leash while chained and being interrogated, threatened with assault by military dogs, and compelled to perform a series of dog tricks. He suffered long periods of sleep deprivation, including "48 of 54 consecutive days of 18-to-20-hour interrogations," according to one document.

The suffering was so intense that Qahtani was hospitalized twice with brady-cardia, a severe lowering of the heart rate which can be fatal. At one point his heart rate was only 35 beats per minute.

According to his attorney, Qahtani suffers from loss of memory and ability to focus, as well as paranoia. Still imprisoned at Guantanamo, he maintains his innocence and denies any connection to Al Qaeda.

Crawford says she concluded that Qahtani's treatment meets the legal definition of torture and says that is why she dismissed charges against him last year.

Crawford says that the torture of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay has been a public relations disaster for the US government.

<http://sumoud.tao.ca/?q=node/view/1177>

<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2009/01/15/f-rfa-macdonald.html>

15) NEW US ADMINISTRATION PLANS TO CLOSE GUANTANAMO

----- Jan 2009

Barack Obama's new administration has made some indications as to how they will approach the war on terror, torture and detention.

Aides to Mr. Obama say that, on his first day in office on Wednesday he will issue an executive order to close Guantánamo, although he conceded on Sunday that it would

take time and is almost certain not to occur within the first 100 days of his administration.

Aides have also indicated that he is likely to suspend the military commission system until the jail is closed.

The plan as to where detainees would go after the prison is closed is still being worked out. So far, it appears that some would be released and others would be prosecuted in U.S. criminal courts.

A third group of detainees -- the ones whose cases are most entangled in highly classified information -- might be going before a new court designed especially to handle sensitive national security cases. The plan for this new court has drawn criticism from some detainee lawyers and human rights groups.

Attorney General nominee, Eric Holder, has declared waterboarding to be a form of torture and has vowed to shut down Guantanamo Bay.

Obama recently distanced himself from suggestions that top Bush administration officials should face prosecution for authorizing torture, illegal wiretapping and other attacks on democratic rights.

http://www.democracynow.org/2009/1/16/attorney_general_nominee_eric_holder_declares

<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2009/01/15/holder-torture.html>

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20081110/obama_khadr_081110/20081110?hub=World

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20081110.w Guantanamo1110/BNStory/Front>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=10943>

16) US HAS HELD 12 YOUTH AT GUANTANAMO

----- Nov 2008

The U.S. has held at least a dozen juveniles at Guantanamo since it opened in 2002.

According to the study by the Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas, eight of the 12 juvenile detainees have been released.

One of the young detainees committed suicide in 2006.

Two of the remaining detainees are scheduled to face military commission trials in January.

This includes the only western national left in Guantanamo, Canadian Omar Khadr, who is now 21.

<http://www.am1150.ca/news/56/828373>

17) ALABAMA SHERIFF JAILED FOR MAKING MONEY OFF OF STARVING PRISONERS -----

Jan 2009

A sheriff in Alabama has been locked up in the same jail where he works after he was found in contempt for not adequately feeding prisoners while profiting from the skimpy meals.

Sheriffs in most of the counties in Alabama operate under the system that allows them to make money operating the jail kitchens.

Alabama law pays sheriffs \$1.75 a day for each prisoner they house.

The law does not require the money to be spent at the jail and allows sheriffs to keep extra as personal income.

This often means inadequate food and services for prisoners.

In court, most of the prisoners from the jail appeared thin, with baggy jail coveralls hanging off their frames.

They testified that their meals are so small that they're forced to buy snacks from a for-profit store the jailers operate.

For example, the 3 am breakfast at the jail consists of half an egg, a spoonful of oatmeal and one piece of toast.

This sheriff pocketed more than \$200,000 in surplus meal money but denied prisoners were malnourished.

The judge ordered the sheriff jailed until he comes up with a plan to provide the 300 prisoners with nutritionally adequate meals, as required by a 2001 court order.

<http://www.cbc.ca/cp/world/090107/w0107100A.html>

<http://jonathanturley.org/2009/01/08/federal-judge-jails-alabama-sheriff-who-profited-after-inmates-went-hungry/>

18) CONRAD BLACK CRITICIZES THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX FROM HIS JAIL CELL

----- Dec 2008

Who knew Conrad Black would be the next critic of the prison industrial complex?

Well, it appears spending some time in an American jail has allowed Mr. Black to gain some perspective.

In a letter to a British paper, Mr. Black criticized the war on drugs and American incarceration rates.

He pointed that the U.S. imprisons at least 10 times more people per capita than most other western nations.

Mr. Black says a trillion dollars in taxpayers' money has been squandered on the prison system, needlessly locking up almost one million people for low level drug crimes.

He blames the systems problems on three different interests -- Private prison companies, a gigantic prison service industry, and prison guard unions. These interests he argues all advocate for more prosecutions and longer sentences.

He says penal reform is a cause he hopes to champion when he's released from prison.

The rant is apparently one of the first times Conrad Black has ever complained about incarceration rates and the prison system.

It comes just days after he asked US President George W. Bush for clemency.

He is serving a 6 and half year sentence for defrauding his former media company of millions of dollars.

<http://www.thespec.com/News/BreakingNews/article/471545>

19) PEACE ACTIVISTS CALL FOR RELEASE OF YOUNG ISRAELI REFUSENIKS
----- Jan 2009

Last month, peace activists in Israel and around the world participated in a day of action to call on Israeli authorities to release teenagers imprisoned for refusing to serve in the army for reasons of conscience.

Several teenagers have been repeatedly jailed for refusing to enlist in the Israeli army.

Their refusal stems from their opposition to the Israeli military occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to the practices of the Israeli army there.

There is no civilian service alternative to military draft in Israel and, although a "conscience committee" exists within the Israeli army, exemption is only usually granted to those who refuse to serve on religious grounds.

Teenagers who refuse to enlist because they do not want to find themselves in a situation where they may contribute to or participate in committing human rights abuses are generally sent to jail for months.

At the same time, Israeli soldiers who commit grave human rights

violations, including war crimes, such as unlawful killings of unarmed civilians, reckless shelling of densely populated residential areas or wanton destruction of homes, are routinely granted impunity.

Amnesty International considers these teenagers to be prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/israeli-teenagers-jailed-refusing-serve-army-20081218>

20) HUNDREDS OF PALESTINIANS DETAINED DURING ATTACK ON GAZA

----- Jan 2009

Hundreds of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip have been detained by Israeli forces during its current attacks on Gaza.

The Israeli military has created four detention camps in the Gaza Strip where they are holding at least 500 Palestinians.

Some of them have been transferred to Israel for interrogation.

The Addameer Prisoners' Support and Human Rights Organization has sent a letter to the Red Cross about the situation. They are concerned that those detained may be at serious risk of torture and want the Red Cross to find out where people have been detained.

The Red Cross responded saying that they have 'no information they could communicate at this time.'

In a public statement, Addameer expressed their outrage that Israel has prevented members of the Red Cross, other international and UN bodies and Palestinian human rights organizations from gaining access to the people in its custody.

Earlier this month, Palestinian political prisoners in different Israeli prisons and detention centers went on a three-day hunger strike in protest against the ongoing Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip.

<http://sumoud.tao.ca/?q=node/view/1169>

<http://sumoud.tao.ca/?q=node/view/1172>

<http://sumoud.tao.ca/?q=node/view/1173>

21) BURMA HANDS DOWN HARSH SENTENCES TO SAFFRON REVOLUTION ORGANIZERS

-- Nov 2008

Fourteen Burmese dissidents have been given 65 year sentences for their part in last year's protests against the military dictatorship in that country.

The fourteen were sentenced behind closed doors in Yangon's Insein prison.

They were organizers in the August 2007 anti-government demonstrations in Burma. This is popularly known as the "Saffron Revolution".

Three of those sentenced are Min Zeya, Kyaw Min Yu and his partner, Nilar Thein.

They are prominent 88 Generation Students group leaders - former student activists who spearheaded the pro-democracy uprising in Myanmar 20 years ago.

Amnesty International says the sentences show that Burma's military government is ignoring calls by the international community to clean up its human rights record.

Burma has been under military rule of one form or another since 1962, although the generals have scheduled elections in 2010 as one of the final stages in a seven-step "roadmap to democracy."

Western governments and the domestic opposition have derided the process as a charade, especially since a new constitution it spawned in May makes little dent in the military's grip on power.

More than 2,100 political prisoners are currently behind bars in Burma.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/harsh-sentences-myanmar-dissidents-20081113>

<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCATRE4AA2B220081111?sp=true>

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How to Podcast Stark Raven

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WHAT IS A PODCAST?

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More Info on the Stark Raven Media Collective  
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The Stark Raven Media Collective takes a closer look at prisons and criminalization.

Stark Raven produces a radio program three times a month featuring in-depth interviews, news and analysis on issues related to prisons and criminalization, both locally and from around the world.

The radio program has been on the air for 21 years.

Topics we cover include: Canadian prison conditions, tough on crime agenda, detention & the war on terror, women in prison, alternatives to prison, criminalization of migration & poverty, privatization, security certificates, government policy, political prisoners,

policing, the death penalty, the personal & political impacts of incarceration, prisoner's writings.

The collective's other activities include organizing community events and maintaining <http://www.prisonjustice.ca> - an online resource centre on Canadian prison issues.

Feel free to contact us if you have a story that you think we should cover on the show or have any feedback. Stark Raven is always seeking new volunteers and contributors for help with interviews, news research, musical contributions, web work and more.

CONTACT:

Email: [starkraven \(at\) prisonjustice \(dot\) ca](mailto:starkraven@prisonjustice.ca)
Voicemail: (604) 682-3269, ext. 3019
Web: <http://www.prisonjustice.ca>
Snail Mail: Stark Raven c/o Vancouver Co-op Radio. 110-360 Columbia St.
Vancouver, BC. Coast Salish Territory. V6A 4J1

LIVE RADIO:

Mondays 7-8pm, (1st to 3rd Monday, Pacific Time. Vancouver Co-op Radio)
*102.7 FM in Vancouver
*<http://www.coopradio.org>
*Satellite: Starchoice #845
*Various cable frequencies around BC

NEWS, PODCASTS:

<http://www.prisonjustice.ca>

Join our monthly email digest, featuring links to audio & show podcast, recent news and upcoming show highlights. To join, email us!

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Support Stark Raven: Become a Member of Co-op Radio  
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Support broadcast space for programs such as Stark Raven. Become a Member of Co-op Radio and help keep independent media alive!

Vancouver Co-operative Radio, CFRO, 102.7FM is a non-commercial, co-operatively-owned, listener-supported, community radio station. Located in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Co-op Radio strives to provide a space for under-represented and marginalized communities.

Support Stark Raven as we cut through the mainstream crime sensationalism with in-depth interviews, news and analysis on the role of prisons in our society and consequences of criminalizing affected communities.

Memberships start are \$60/year. You can also pay what you can/want to become a member of Co-op Radio. For more details on becoming a member of Co-op Radio check out: <http://www.coopradio.org/member/index.html> or just email us at Stark Raven, starkraven (at) prisonjustice (dot) ca, and we can hook you up as a member.