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ADVOCATES RELEASE FIRST-EVER BLUEPRINT FOR ENDING SOLITARY CONFINEMENT COMPLETELY IN NEW YORK CITY JAILS AND URGE IMMEDIATE ACTION

(New York, NY) - Today, survivors of solitary confinement, family members of people in solitary, and other advocates gathered on the steps of City Hall to announce the release of a [Blueprint for Ending Solitary Confinement in New York City Jails](#). Together, they urged immediate action to replace this torture with more humane, effective, and safer alternatives. This blueprint is the first comprehensive plan ever released for fully eliminating solitary confinement anywhere in the country. In the wake of [Layleen Polanco's tragic and preventable death](#), and in recognition of the countless other people who have lost their lives because of solitary in New York City - including [Kalief Browder](#), [Bradley Ballard](#) and [Jason Echevarria](#) - or suffered devastating psychological and physical harm, community members are calling on the Mayor, Board of Correction, New York City Council, and Department of Correction to take immediate action to finally and fully end solitary confinement.

Akeem Browder, activist and brother of the late Kalief Browder, said: "How can we continue using the term corrections when torture is what describes it best. For my brother, Kalief, suffering in a torturous solitary cell during the hottest days of New York's summer or the coldest nights, this was just one of the many torments that contributed to his and countless others' death. It's time for New York to completely end solitary confinement and take responsibility for its unforgivable acts towards human beings."

Candie - Solitary Survivor, said: "I spent more than three years in solitary at Rikers Island, only to be acquitted once I finally got to have a trial. Solitary is absolute torture. It reeks of death. I don't know why it is still being used. Right now, there is at least one person in their cell contemplating suicide, and it up to us to save them. I made it out alive - physically - but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, I'm gone."

Council Member Bill Perkins (former lead Senate sponsor of the HALT Solitary Confinement Act): "Solitary confinement is state-sanctioned torture. It is an abomination that has destroyed far

too many lives. It has no place in New York City and it must end. This Blueprint provides the way forward to end this torture and New York City must take action immediately.”

Background:

There have been growing calls in New York City, New York State, and around the country to end solitary confinement. Policy-makers and public officials have been joining in that call, including the New York City Council Progressive and Women’s Caucuses, and leading U.S. Presidential candidates, including [Bernie Sanders](#), [Elizabeth Warren](#), [Kamala Harris](#), [Corey Booker](#), and [Beto O’Rourke](#). As early as 2011, the [United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture](#) called for the complete abolition of solitary for, among others, all people in pretrial detention (as the vast majority of people in New York City’s jails are held) because it amounts to torture. The blueprint released today provides key mechanisms for New York City to effectuate a complete end to solitary and adopt proven, evidence-based alternatives that actually promote safety and reduce violence.

The New York City Board of Correction, an oversight board with authority to set minimum standards for the city jails, has said they have been considering rulemaking around solitary and all forms of restrictive housing for years. In July, in response to the growing calls to end solitary following Layleen Polanco’s death, they said they would be initiating rulemaking. As of this writing, the Board still has not acted.

Thanks to efforts led by survivors of solitary, family members, and other members of the Jails Action Coalition, the Board of Correction adopted rules placing some limits on solitary in 2015 and New York City has reduced the number of people in punitive segregation. At the same time, the City continues to hold large numbers of people in punitive segregation and many other people in a variety of other units that amount to solitary by another name because of the extreme isolation people endure in them. New York City must take action to finally and fully eliminate solitary confinement *in all its forms* before any other lives are taken or minds destroyed, and the released blueprint provides the mechanisms to do so. Advocates are calling for New York City to implement this Blueprint to completely end solitary in its jails, while continuing to call on state lawmakers to enact the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, S.1623/A.2500. HALT currently has more than enough votes in the state legislature to pass, and advocates are calling on the state legislature and Governor Cuomo to enact HALT when the legislative session resumes in January.

While the details of the Blueprint are written specifically for New York City, its overall framework and concepts can apply anywhere. No person should be in solitary in pretrial detention, in jails anywhere, or for that matter in prisons anywhere in New York or across the country. We hope that survivors of solitary, impacted family members, and advocates across the country can use the blueprint to end this torture everywhere.

As a city that aspires to be one of the most progressive in the country, New York City must lead the way in ending this cruel, inhumane, and counterproductive practice. At the same time, we recognize that ending solitary confinement is only one step. Fundamentally shifting away from

isolation and deprivation — and from the entire racist and destructive punishment paradigm — is necessary to achieve safety and justice. We also believe that abolishing solitary confinement — often called a jail within a jail, or a prison within a prison — and replacing it with positive human engagement and supportive programming can light a path toward ending incarceration. Now is the time to act.