

USA: New Fight to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal

Saturday 4 July 2015, by [DUNCAN Brad](#) (Date first published: 1 July 2015).

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL is facing a potentially fatal health crisis brought about by medical neglect and abuse suffered inside State Correctional Institution — Mahanoy in Eastern Pennsylvania. In addition he has been held incommunicado and denied visits from his lawyer, wife or independent physicians.

In 2011, after years of international protest, Mumia's 1981 death sentence (following his wrongful conviction for killing a Philadelphia police officer) was rescinded allowing him to enter the general prison population.

Although this was a major victory for the movement to win his freedom, it brought its own set of issues.

The current crisis started in January of this year when Mumia developed a very serious skin allergy, which was misdiagnosed by prison doctors. This misdiagnosis and mistreatment led to major complications including adult-onset diabetes, and on March 30th he collapsed from diabetic shock.

Mumia, who had never had diabetes previously, nearly died from it. He was taken to an intensive care unit but after three days was returned to prison where his health continued to deteriorate.

Requests to see an independent doctor have been denied by Department of Corrections, legally guaranteed lawyer-client meetings have been denied or constricted, phone calls to his primary doctor have been denied, and repeatedly Mumia has been prevented from seeing his wife.

When family and supporters were finally able to see him his physical appearance was horrifying; a crippling rash covers his skin as do open sores, his face and eyes appear sunken and deathly, he has lost over 65 pounds, and is beset by violent tremors and memory loss. In mid-May he was back in the hospital after collapsing, although his family and lawyer were told little else.

Since April the international network of supporters and activists who had fought for him so long has sprung into action, including strong demands for his right to medical treatment, including independent specialists, from figures such as Desmond Tutu and Cornel West, and street demonstrations in multiple cities. This wave of international protest has had an impact; by the beginning of May Mumia was allowed to see his lawyer and his indefatigable supporter Pam Africa.

Pam Africa, who returned to visit him at the end of May as well, said there were some very small improvements in his condition, but that the situation is still critical. What is needed is organized political pressure from all quarters, a revived movement that will let the State of Pennsylvania know that we will not allow them to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal by other means. Get involved by contacting the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (their website freemumia.com details local actions), the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (naacpldf.org), or write to Mumia directly: Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM 8335, SCI Mahanoy, 301 Morea Road, Frackville, PA 17932.

Brad Duncan

P.S.

* From Against the Current n°177, July-August 2015.