

## Statement on Ontario Provincial Police decision to not lay charges in the death of Soleiman Faqiri

Statement By:

THE BLACK LEGAL ACTION CENTRE (BLAC)  
THE SOUTH ASIAN LEGAL CLINIC OF ONTARIO (SALCO)  
THE CHINESE AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEGAL CLINIC (CSALC)  
THE ONTARIO COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING IMMIGRANTS (OCASI)  
THE URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS (UARR)  
THE COLOUR OF POVERTY-COLOUR OF CHANGE (COP-COC)

August 10, 2020

We are deeply distressed by the failure of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) to lay charges against the correctional officers at the Central East Correctional Centre (CECC) after the death of Soleiman Faqiri.<sup>1</sup>

On December 15, 2016, Mr. Faqiri, a 30 year old man with schizophrenia, who was caged in a segregation unit, died after being brutally restrained, beaten, shackled and pepper sprayed by at least six armed guards. A coroner's report revealed more than 50 signs of "blunt impact trauma" on Mr. Faqiri's body, *including on his neck*, at the time of his death. Further, that the multiple traumas, were likely the result of the restraint.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than receiving the treatment he required, Mr. Faqiri was segregated and subjected to intrusive and violent mental health interventions. We stand with Mr. Faqiri family, and condemn the violence that is perpetrated against Black, Indigenous, and other racialized Canadians.

We are enraged by the impunity afforded those responsible for Mr. Faqiri's death – despite, findings that the brutality with which he was treated, was the likely result of his death. This impunity is correctly fueling the call for an immediate change to the status quo across policing and criminal justice in this country, and a shift away from dehumanizing those most vulnerable in Canadian society. Soleiman Faqiri should be alive today. Instead, he paid the ultimate price for his vulnerability. He was deprived of his life, and now has been deprived of justice.

We understand that the provincial Crown Attorney investigated and determined that charges should not be laid in this case. We call on the Ontario Provincial Police and the provincial Crown Attorney to release details of its investigation, and we call on the Ontario Provincial Police to lay criminal charges against guards who participated in an were responsible for the death of Soleiman Faqiri.

We reiterate the position taken by BLAC on this issue,<sup>3</sup> a position supported by a global movement for change.

This unrelenting violence against Black, Indigenous and racialized people, particularly those whose lives intersect with disability, reflects a massive failure of government – at all levels – to meet its obligations to protect and promote human dignity, equity and non-discrimination. **This violence must end now.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Nasser, Shanifa. "A Mentally Ill Man Died After A Run-In With Jail Guards In 2016. Now Ontario Police Say No One Will Be Charged". *CBC*, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/soleiman-faqiri-ontario-jail-charges-1.5674400>. Accessed 7 Aug 2020. See also,

<sup>2</sup> Syed, Fatima. "Mentally Ill Man Who Died In Lindsay Jail Was Pepper Sprayed, Held Down With Leg Irons, Subdued By Officers, Report Says". *Toronto Star*, 2020, <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/02/06/mentally-ill-man-who-died-in-lindsay-jail-was-pepper-sprayed-held-down-with-leg-irons-subdued-by-officers-report-says.html>. Accessed 7 Aug 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Black Legal Action Centre. "*This Ends Now! Statement and demands by the black legal action centre on policing and anti-Black racism*" (June 25, 2020) Available at: <https://www.blacklegalactioncentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BLAC-Statement-on-Policing-and-Anti-Black-Racism-June-25-2020.pdf>