

# Baltimore caravan demands protection for prisoners

written by Lev Koufax

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On April 18, progressive working-class activists in Baltimore held a car caravan in solidarity with those currently incarcerated in Maryland jails and prisons. The caravan, organized by the Prisoners Solidarity Committee and the Peoples Power Assembly, demanded that Gov. Larry Hogan immediately begin to release prisoners from facilities that have become Covid-19 hotspots.

The situation developed even though [local news outlets](#) warned for over a month that prisons were prime candidates for severe corona virus outbreaks. Since that time, over 100 cases of the virus have been reported in Maryland prisons. One prisoner has died. In all likelihood, those reported are far lower than the actual number of cases.

Individuals inside Maryland prisons have described terrible conditions and a complete lack of preparedness. Prisoners have been denied soap, showers, any personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical care. Prisoners with symptoms have been left to their own devices inside solitary cells.

For these reasons, the Baltimore caravan demanded proper care for prisoners during the coronavirus pandemic. Cars were covered with signs demanding “Free them all!” and “No bars but soap bars!”

One car had the names of prisoners currently being denied PPE and medical treatment in a prison in Cumberland, Md.: James Young III, Alfred Shinard, Tracy Skinner and Terrance Mahogany.

Members of the caravan chanted out their windows against institutions that are simply concentration camps for working-class and oppressed people.

As the caravan passed the Baltimore prisons, hundreds of prisoners could be heard out of their cell windows chanting, whistling and whooping in support. At one point, prisoners even started chanting along with the caravan. This included a chant decrying the lack of action taken by Baltimore Mayor Jack Young. The moment was powerful and filled with solidarity.

The United States prison system is based on racism and exploitation.

Simultaneously, [another car caravan](#) took place in Annapolis, Maryland’s state capital. However, this caravan was neither progressive nor pro-worker. Various right-wing, white supremacist and frankly fascist organizations held this caravan to demand that Gov. Hogan “reopen” the Maryland economy.

The fascist caravan echoed the words of demagogue Donald Trump. The leaders of the caravan were business owners and petty capitalists. Their message was clear — they would be more than willing to sacrifice thousands of workers’ lives to the virus as long as they were profiting.

The contrast between these two caravans was dramatic. One called for human rights for prisoners and all workers. The other would have workers believe they should sacrifice themselves for Trump and the bosses.

Baltimore stands firmly in solidarity with all prisoners during this pandemic and against those who would put millions of workers at risk for profits.

Video: <https://www.facebook.com/PeoplesPowerAssembly/videos/226570578562064/>

*SLL photos by Miranda Etel*

