



November 16, 2006

Governor M. Jodi Rell
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Rell:

As you are no doubt aware, Human Rights Watch recently issued a report titled "Cruel and Degrading: The Use of Dogs for Cell Extractions in U.S. Prisons." The report, which was widely publicized in Connecticut and nationally, identified Connecticut and Iowa as the only two states that currently used dogs for cell extractions. As soon as the report was released, Iowa announced that it would immediately cease the use of dogs for cell extractions, leaving Connecticut as the sole remaining state in the nation to continue this barbaric practice. The Hartford Courant ran an editorial stating that "[this] cruel practice brings to mind the graphic photos of snarling dogs used to control inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq," and that "using unmuzzled dogs to terrify uncooperative inmates in Connecticut and pry them out of their prison cells is a policy that should be put to sleep."

Unfortunately, it appears that the Department of Corrections has decided to defend the practice that has now been abandoned by every other state in the Union. Last week, in response to our inquiry, Commissioner Teresa C. Lantz responded that the language of the Administrative Directive setting the threshold for the use of dogs for cell extractions had been changed from "a clear and imminent danger to the safety of staff or inmates," to "imminent threat to the life of staff, inmates and/or the public."

As the Human Rights Watch report notes, there is a broad consensus among corrections professionals that the use of dogs for cell extractions is *never* necessary or appropriate, since there are always better and equally effective alternatives and the use of dogs is inherently degrading. As the report also notes, using dogs for cell extractions results in unnecessary injury to prisoners. One Connecticut prisoner quoted in the report described permanent damage from a dog bite that severed multiple nerves in his hand. Another described an incident in which he was kneeling against the wall in his cell with his hands up when he was attacked and bitten in the back by a dog that had been brought into the cell to subdue his cellmate.

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Therefore, while we appreciate the language change of the Administrative Directive, we continue to believe that the use of dogs for cell extractions under any circumstances should be rejected. We urge you to direct the Department of Corrections to end this barbaric practice. We would appreciate a response, and would be glad to meet with you to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Vann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger C. Vann, Executive Director
ACLU of Connecticut

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Renee C. Redman', with a large, stylized initial 'R' and a long horizontal flourish.

Renee C. Redman, Legal Director
ACLU of Connecticut

Margaret Winter, Associate Director
National Prisoner Project of the ACLU
Washington, D.C.