

# SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC DEFENDER

MANOHAR RAJU – PUBLIC DEFENDER  
MATT GONZALEZ – CHIEF ATTORNEY



February 19, 2021

Dear Mayor Breed and Dr. Colfax,

Thank you for the continuous work you are doing to address COVID-19 in San Francisco, and to ensure mass testing and vaccinations. It is greatly appreciated.

I write today to urge that the entire San Francisco incarcerated population be prioritized for immediate vaccination. We appreciate that Sheriff Miyamoto has been championing this issue as well. The situation is urgent and serious.

The jail population stood at 828 people this morning, approximately 160 of whom are already in the vaccination process, leaving approximately 670 vaccinations still needed.

By comparison, the state has already vaccinated over 33,000 incarcerated people in California prisons, including over 8200 just last week. Moreover, Alameda County has committed to vaccinating all those in its jails beginning February 22 and Contra Costa County has officially classified those who live and work in their jails as part of Phase 1b, Tier 1.

We are particularly concerned about the population of County Jail #3 (574 people at today's count), who are all housed in small cells measuring approximately 5 by 10 feet. CJ3 has been on lockdown conditions due to the pandemic for 11 months and many persons have been incarcerated there throughout that time, or a large part of it. Lockdown has meant no family visits and no programming. It has also meant confinement in these small cells, whether alone or with a cellmate, for 23 hours a day, with just one hour out of the cell to make calls, shower, and walk around the main room in the pod or an exercise room that has no equipment of any kind.

The current conditions in SF jails resemble solitary confinement in concerning ways. Solitary is defined as: "the practice of isolating individuals who are incarcerated in small cells for 22 to 24 hours a day. . . People housed in these settings are exposed to social isolation, sensory deprivation, and physical idleness. Additionally, these individuals have less access to programming, visitation, and other privileges . . ." Studies have shown that *any amount* of time spent in solitary confinement increases the risk of death after release, including deaths by suicide, homicide, and opioid overdose. "Even if someone doesn't enter solitary with a mental health condition, it's possible for them to develop a specific psychiatric syndrome due to the effects of isolation. Dr. Stuart Grassian, who first identified the syndrome, notes that it is characterized by a progressive inability to tolerate ordinary things, such as the sound of plumbing; hallucinations and illusions; severe panic attacks; difficulties with thinking, concentration, and memory; obsessive, sometimes harmful, thoughts that won't go away; paranoia; problems with impulse control; and delirium."

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**Community Justice Center**  
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**Bayview Magic**  
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**MoMagic**  
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We have seen first-hand the adverse mental health effects in those we represent over this last year and we know that such effects will reverberate over time, affecting personal and public health and safety. We thus urge the city to allocate vaccines for the entire local jail population.

I thank you again for your tireless work on behalf of San Franciscans throughout this time. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mano Raju". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Mano Raju  
San Francisco Public Defender

cc: Sheriff Paul Miyamoto  
Dr. Lisa Pratt, Director of Jail Health Services