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**For Immediate Release**

## **Canada: British Columbia to End Immigration Detention in Jails**

***#WelcomeToCanada Campaign Celebrates First Province to Terminate Federal Contract***

(British Columbia, July 21, 2022) – In a historic move, British Columbia’s Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Mike Farnworth, [announced today](#) that the province will terminate its immigration detention contract with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

“Today’s decision is a momentous step. We commend British Columbia on being the first province to stop locking up refugee claimants and migrants in its jails solely on immigration grounds,” said Ketty Nivyabandi, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada (English Speaking). “This is a true human rights victory, one which upholds the dignity and rights of people who come to Canada in search of safety or a better life.”

British Columbia’s landmark announcement came after the province concluded a review of its immigration detention contract. In the course of the review, the province received submissions from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International alongside [a BC-based coalition of social justice, academic and grassroots organizations](#), advocates with lived experience in immigration detention, as well as [healthcare providers](#), [lawyers and academic scholars](#), and [religious leaders](#) across Canada. In June, the [Vancouver City Council voted unanimously](#) to urge the BC government to end immigration detention in the province’s jails.

Over the past five years, CBSA has incarcerated hundreds of people on immigration grounds in British Columbia’s provincial jails. In a [June 2021 report](#), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International documented how people in Canadian immigration detention are regularly handcuffed, shackled, and held with little to no contact with the outside world. Canada is among the few countries in the global north with no legal limit on the duration of immigration detention, meaning people can be detained for months or years with no end in sight.

People with psychosocial disabilities (or mental health conditions) experience discrimination throughout the immigration detention process. For example, [CBSA policy](#) indicates immigration detainees with psychosocial disabilities may be incarcerated in provincial jails rather than dedicated federal immigration holding centers in order to access “specialized care.” People from communities of color, and Black people in particular, appear to be incarcerated for longer periods in immigration detention and often in provincial jails instead of immigration holding centers.

The [#WelcomeToCanada](#) campaign began in British Columbia in October 2021 and has since expanded to Quebec and Nova Scotia. British Columbia’s decision is a major milestone on the path to ending immigration detention in provincial jails in Canada, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said. BC Corrections told Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International the province will give CBSA its 12-month written notice to terminate the immigration detention contract next week.

“We are thrilled that BC has taken this historic step to eliminate some of the worst abuses in immigration detention,” said Samer Muscati, associate disability rights director at Human Rights Watch. “We urge other provinces and the federal government to follow suit by ending this harmful practice across the country, and to get on the path to abolishing immigration detention.”

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