

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



Rt. Hon Jacinda Ardern,  
Prime Minister  
Freepost Parliament  
Private Bag 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160  
[j.ardern@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:j.ardern@ministers.govt.nz)

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

PO BOX 5300  
WELLESLEY STREET  
AUCKLAND 1141  
0800 AMNESTY (266 378)  
[advocacy@amnesty.org.nz](mailto:advocacy@amnesty.org.nz)  
[www.amnesty.org.nz](http://www.amnesty.org.nz)

15 May 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

### **Government transparency regarding prison lockdown hours**

I am writing to you to express my deep concern at the repeated failure of the Minister of Corrections to release official data on prison “lockdown” hours in New Zealand.

This follows multiple allegations of concern from media and individuals regarding the routine use of extended lockdown hours, including up to 29 hours at Auckland Region Women’s Correctional Facility, that **pre-date COVID-19** public health measures in January 2020. The latter reports contradict previous assurances from the Minister of Corrections that extended lockdown hours are not being used in New Zealand’s prisons.

Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand (AIANZ) has sought to engage constructively with the Minister of Corrections on this issue, including writing to him directly. This has not resulted in any meaningful response as evidenced below:

<b>8 April 2020</b>	AIANZ sends correspondence [enclosed] to the Minister expressing concerns at unverified reports of extended lockdown hours and requesting urgent release of data.
<b>17 April 2020</b>	AIANZ receives a written response [enclosed] from the Minister. The Minister notes that he had received assurances that no prisons are routinely using extended lockdown hours. However <b>no data on lockdown hours was provided, nor were reasons as to why data may be unavailable.</b>
<b>23 April 2020</b>	AIANZ sends an open letter [enclosed] on behalf of <b>1337 people</b> to the Minister calling for the urgent release of prison lockdown hours’ data.
<b>7<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>	AIANZ emails the Minister to clarify whether data requested is being treated as a request under the Official Information Act, particularly given that the Chief Ombudsman has now publicly confirmed that the Act should still function during the state of emergency, albeit with potentially different timeframes to allow for extenuating circumstances. The OIA requires that reasons are given if an extension is required, or the data is unable to be released.
<b>11th May 2020</b>	AIANZ emails the Minister confirming that given the lack of response and expiry of the OIA 20 working days deadline, <b>AIANZ will be filing a complaint with the Ombudsman regarding the failure to respond.</b>

AIANZ welcomes that this Government is committed to tackling issues in our criminal justice system and building a new consensus on how we approach this issue. Ensuring that human rights are being upheld in our prisons is an essential part of changing the course to ensure less offending, less reoffending, and fewer victims of crime.

**In order to have these assurances, build consensus and identify important areas where our system can do better, transparency and trust is essential. AIANZ is therefore calling for the regular national collation and public release of prison lockdown hours to enable human rights scrutiny from civil society and the public.**

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meg de Ronde', written in a cursive style.

Meg de Ronde  
**Executive Director**  
**Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand**