

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AMR 51/015/2012

23 February 2012

USA: Amnesty International welcomes proposed closure of Tamms Correctional Centre

Amnesty International welcomes the proposal by Illinois Governor Pat Quinn to close Tamms Correctional Centre. The organization has long been concerned that conditions in the maximum security facility (CMAX) where prisoners are confined for up to 23 hours a day in cellular confinement in stark surroundings for months or years, with little exercise or human contact, no work and limited educational programs flout international standards for the humane treatment of prisoners.

There is a significant body of evidence in the USA and elsewhere that prolonged isolation and lack of human contact can cause serious psychological and physical harm, particularly if accompanied by other deprivations such as lack of reduced external stimuli, confinement to an enclosed space and inadequate exercise.

The proposal announced on the 22 February 2012 is part of a series of measures to cut the state's budget which will be considered by the state legislature. Amnesty International will be urging legislators to approve the closure.

Amnesty International calls on all states to end the practise of holding prisoners in long-term isolation in harsh conditions that are incompatible with the USA's treaty obligations.

ENDS/