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PRESS RELEASE

**INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
ANNOUNCES HEARING ON TEXAS EXTREME PRISON HEAT**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has announced it will hold a hearing in Washington, D.C. on October 27, 2014 regarding Texas’ violation of prison inmates’ human rights by exposing them to dangerously hot temperatures. The IACHR is an independent organ of the Organization of American States, whose mission is to promote and protect human rights in the Western hemisphere.

Ariel Dulitzky, director of the University of Texas School of Law’s Human Rights Clinic, sought the hearing to present the findings from the clinic’s year-long investigation, which it [released in its report](#) “Deadly Heat in Texas Prisons,” on April 22, 2014. The report found the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) is violating the U.S. Constitution and international human rights standards.

“All the major human rights bodies affirm prisoners’ right to be free from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, such as exposure to temperature extremes,” said Dulitzky. “Many international human rights courts have found extreme heat conditions similar to those in Texas’ prisons were inhuman or degrading treatment.”

“Searing heat in Texas prisons is a persistent, well-known danger. Summer comes every year, and every year, people die,” said Brian McGiverin, attorney with the Texas Civil Rights Project. “Since 2007, heat has killed at least fourteen Texas inmates, and countless others are still at risk.”

Earlier this summer, the Texas Civil Rights Project, Edwards Law, and the UT School of Law Civil Rights Clinic [filed a lawsuit](#) in Houston federal court to challenge TDCJ’s practice of exposing sick, elderly, and disabled prisoners to dangerously hot temperatures.

“TDCJ has been aware inmates were dying from extreme heat since at least 1998, and it has been more than two years since the Texas Civil Rights Project brought the first of several lawsuits against the TDCJ for wrongful deaths caused by heat,” said McGiverin. “But even now, TDCJ is refusing to take basic steps to protect inmates.”

The Texas Commission on Jail Standards already requires every county jail in Texas to maintain internal temperatures stay between 65 and 85 degrees – from Archer County, with space for 8 inmates, to Harris County, with space for over 10,000 inmates. Other states with hot climates, such as Arkansas, Arizona, Oklahoma, and New Mexico, air condition their prisons. A federal court recently ordered Louisiana to install air conditioning in at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Even the detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is air-conditioned.

“It is very fortunate the international human rights community is taking heed of this timely and important issue,” said Dulitzky.