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PICTURE THE HOMELESS

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Homeless People Stand Against Torture

Homeless leaders to hold a press conference and rally protesting policies that deprive them of the basic human need to sleep

New York, NY. — Refusing to accept the dangerous and dehumanizing conditions of the shelter system, many homeless New Yorkers have little choice but to sleep in public spaces like parks, trains, or train stations. However, anti-homelessness policing policies prohibit the homeless from sleeping in public spaces. The NYPD goes to great lengths to remove the homeless from public space, charging them on unsubstantiated grounds with violations like disorderly conduct. For the homeless who have no other place to safely sleep, the constant disturbances from the police amount to sleep deprivation, which is a form of torture according to the United Nations.

Members of the Picture the Homeless Civil Rights Committee will hold a press conference and rally at Penn Station to bring attention to police practices that violate their civil and human rights. Joan Harrison, who is homeless and has spent many sleepless nights at Penn Station, reports that “[the police] regularly shout into the faces of the homeless while prodding them to wake up and wake them nearly every hour so that they cannot sleep. Some even make exultant ‘woo-hoo’ cries or bang their batons loudly and rhythmically as if on exuberant drums or speed up their carts ostentatiously while calling out ‘Wakey! Wakey’ as they rush past the sleeping bodies of exhausted homeless people.”

The PTH Civil Rights Committee will demand an end to policies that punish and criminalize the homeless. Mayor Bloomberg would rather “manage” homelessness through policies that try to shelter, imprison, or displace poor and homeless New Yorkers than create affordable housing for the homeless. The shelter system is at best, a temporary solution, and at worst, a dehumanizing institution that further destabilizes an already vulnerable population. Until truly affordable housing is available, the homeless will continue to be driven into public spaces. As citizens, the homeless have a right to be in public space free of harassment. As human beings, they have a need to sleep in a safe environment and the shelter system fails to address that need.

WHAT:	A Press Conference and Rally at Penn Station (7th Ave Entrance)
WHY:	The homeless are being deprived of their basic need for sleep simply because they are homeless and in public space.
WHEN:	Monday, July 25, 2011 @ 1:30pm
WHERE:	Penn Station (7th Ave Entrance)