

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | July 20, 2014



The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past week that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

Writing in [The New York Times](#), Deborah Jiang-Stein describes journeying to the West Virginia prison where she was born, and discovering she spent the first year of life in the hole with her mother.

[The New York Times](#) published an extensive investigation into the physical assaults endured by prisoners with mental illness at the hands of Rikers guards. According to the journalists, many of the prisoners who experience such assaults are in solitary confinement.

At least forty men at the solitary confinement unit in Wisconsin's state prison have alleged they were abused by correctional officers, according to an investigation by the [Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism](#). One of the men, Marvin Smith, 26, claims that guards purposely injured his wrists and arms, put him in a choke hold, smashed his face into a cell door and twisted his ankle.

The Idaho American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has [filed a brief](#) in support of a petition to return a 15-year-old boy currently being held in solitary confinement in an adult county facility to a juvenile detention center. The young man's Public Defender commented, I see him almost every single day and he is deteriorating mentally, emotionally and physically being held in isolation.

The [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) reported on the case of a New Mexico prisoner who received 90 days in solitary confinement for having a Facebook page in his name that his family updated. Shortly after the EFF published the piece, the state's Corrections Department threw out the man's SHU time and agreed to review the broader policy.

[The New Republic](#) published an article about the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) proposed changes to prison obscenity regulations. Both prisoners and advocates have claimed that under the new regulations, people could end up in solitary confinement simply for exercising their First Amendment rights; for example, the CDCR has called to censor any material deemed oppositional to authority and society.

The warden at Louisiana's Angola Prison is [considering](#) transferring Black Panther member Kenny Zulu Whitmore from solitary confinement into general population where he has spent the last 28 consecutive years. He continued to express concern about Whitmore's political beliefs, explaining, The Black Panther Party advocates violence and racism. I'm not going to let anybody walk around advocating violence and racism.

[CBS San Francisco](#) covered the growing efforts of Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) to end the profession's role in designing death chambers and supermax facilities. The ADPSR is currently lobbying the American Institute of Architects to such a ban in its professional code of ethics.

The UK's [Telegraph](#) visited a Maine solitary confinement cell and published an article that included video, photos, text and interviews with prisoners formerly locked up in isolation.

Talha Ahsan, the British-born poet who was extradited to the US on terrorism charges a little less than two years ago, was sentenced to time served. As reported [here](#) by Solitary Watch's Jean Casella and James Ridgeway, Ahsan and four others argued unsuccessfully in the

European Court of Human Rights that they would endure torture if extradited to Americas supermax facilities. (The sentencing was also covered by [The Guardians](#) Sadhbh Walshe).

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. Shes written for the New York Times, Wired, Buzzfeed News, Solitary Watch, and other outlets. Find her [@stahlidarity](#) and at [stahlidarity.com](#).

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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