

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2010/08/05/ridgeway-on-americas-solitary-confinement-nightmare/>

## Campaign and Advocacy

close

Search

close

close

by [Jean Casella](#) | August 5, 2010

The title of this post is the title of an interview with SW founder James Ridgeway by Russell Mokhiber of the [Corporate Crime Reporter](#). The interview was picked up by [Common Dreams](#), [Counterpunch](#), and others. In it, Ridgeway talks about the genesis of Solitary Watch and why, after 50 years as an investigative journalist, he began working on the subject of torture in U.S. prisons.

Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets [@solitarywatch](#).

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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In 2004, Vanunu said:

From the beginning they put me in total isolation for seven weeks after my kidnapping they even didn't admit I am in an Israeli prison. They put me in total isolation. The first two years, they keep me in a small room, filled with light 24 hours and camera inside. I couldn't sleep for two years; they tried to break my nerves. I demanded to meet a priest. They give me a priest, but without being able to speak to him or him speak to me, only through notes. Shin Bet men sitting near the priest, reading the notes. I'm sending him notes, they're reading them. We couldn't meet as a human being.

Eleven and a half years I was in total isolation alone in a cell I wasn't allowed to use the phone so I use my simple brain, and my initiative. Like if they say I cannot speak to anyone, I decided I can speak, I spoke by reading in a loud voice from the New Testament in English.

I want to leave Israel after suffering seventeen and a half years in total isolation and very cruel, barbaric treatment by the Mossad Shabac inside the prison. Also because Israeli media damaged my image in all of Israel amongst the Jewish people, and some of them hate me, some of them threatened my life when I was released. Some of them are anti-Vanunu because I became a Christian, so I am not free and I am not safe in Israel. And I am demanding to leave Israel to be free.

All Vanunu has wanted since he emerged from 18 years in a tomb-sized windowless cell on April 21, 2004, has been the right to leave Israel and fade into the world, to have a job, a home and family.

You can sign onto the International Petition calling for Vanunus full release @  
[http://humanrights.change.org/petitions/view/release\\_mordechai\\_vanunu](http://humanrights.change.org/petitions/view/release_mordechai_vanunu)

Mordechai Vanunu spent nearly all 18 years in solitary confinement because he told the world that Israel had manufactured upwards of nearly 200 nuclear warheads by 1985.

Israel put Vanunu back into solitary May 23, 2010 for 3 months because he spoke to foreign media in 2004.

In 2006, he said:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYVH\\_SuOec4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYVH_SuOec4)

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