

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Lisa Dawson](#) | May 4, 2013



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.

Media coverage on the urgency of closing Guantanamo was particularly heavy this week, with numerous organizations and groups calling on President Obama to take immediate action. Most recently, *The Economist* described the prison as a deeply un-American disgrace in a story entitled Guantanamo: Enough to make you gag, an obvious reference to the unethical force-feeding of hunger strikers by authorities at the prison. The story outlines the U.S. government's failure to take action to close the prison camp, concluding Mr. Obama should think about America's founding principles, take out his pen and end this stain on its history.

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that California Gov. Jerry Brown appealed for relief from court orders over prison conditions within just 24 hours of unveiling his plan to reduce overcrowding in the state's prisons, which, according to another *Times* story, would free some inmates early to ease crowding, but still miss courts target.

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that people held in isolation in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison are seeking class-action status in their federal lawsuit alleging the state's segregation policies equate to cruel and inhumane treatment. In the motion filed in U.S. District Court in Oakland, the plaintiffs assert that they have been subjected to prolonged confinement in windowless cells with little meaningful contact with others, restricted food, limited communication and no access to educational or treatment programs.

The Denver Channel reports that Evan Ebel, who is suspected of killing Colorado's prison chief, filed two grievances in the final days of his incarceration in which he appealed his being kept in isolation up until his release, writing "Do you have an obligation to the public to reacclimatize dangerous inmates to being around other human beings prior to releasing them into society after they have spent years in solitary confinement & if not, why not?"

Slate publishes a three-part series of excerpts from the declassified memoirs of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, who has been held at the military prison at Guantanamo Bay for almost 11 years. The story describes Slahi's handwritten 466-page manuscript as a harrowing account of his detention, interrogation, and abuse.

WHYY Public Media discusses the history of solitary confinement and the contemporary controversies surrounding these isolation practices in a Radio Times program. Guests include Sean Kelley (Senior Vice President and Director of Programming and Public Relations at Eastern State Penitentiary), Jules Lobel (University of Pittsburgh Law Professor and President of the Center for Constitutional Rights) and Shirley Moore (Executive Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania DOC).

Stars and Stripes reports on life under lockdown for Guantanamo detainees, stating that [w]ith nearly every one of the 166 Guantanamo prisoners now under lockdown back in solitary existence after years of communal living the military has reverted to a battle rhythm reminiscent of the Bush administration.

Sharon Herald reports on the federal lawsuit filed by the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania and the ACLU charging that the use of solitary confinement on mentally ill people in Pennsylvania prisons qualifies as a violation of Constitutional rights. The lawsuit, which

is seeking changes in the way prisons respond to the mentally ill, describes the states use of solitary confinement on mentally ill people as a Dickensian nightmare.

James Ridgeway was named a finalist for an NCCD [Media for a Just Society Award](#) for his article on growing old in prison, [The Other Death Sentence](#).

Lisa Dawson served as an assistant editor, social media manager, and contributor at Solitary Watch. She continues to support prisoners and their family members who need help navigating re-entry. She is on Twitter [@endsolitary](#).

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 [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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