

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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Faith Leaders Respond to DOJ Report Finding Evidence of Unconstitutional Conditions at Mississippi State Prison

WASHINGTON, DC This week, faith leaders responded to a [scathing report by The United States Department of Justice report](#) following an investigation of the Mississippi State Penitentiary (Parchman) under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA). According to the report, the investigation revealed that conditions at the Parchman facility violate the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Failures include not addressing the needs of incarcerated people with serious mental health needs, inadequate suicide prevention measures, and prolonged solitary confinement leading to deaths by suicide.

This report is significant in that it marks the first time the Department of Justice has concluded that a prisons use of solitary confinement violates the constitutional rights of persons without serious mental illness, said **Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture**. For the many faith communities and solitary survivors working to expose the inhumanity of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails, this report reveals a hidden reality we have known for years: that solitary confinement is torture. Significantly for our campaigns, it points to not only the moral imperative to end isolation, but a legal imperative as well.

Of the twelve Parchman suicides in the last three years, all of them occurred in solitary confinement, said **Johnny Perez, solitary confinement survivor and the Director of the U.S. Prisons Program of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture**. This is a human tragedy that is totally preventable. Incarcerated individuals deserve treatment, not the psychological deterioration and death faced by those in isolation at Parchman and throughout the U.S.

According to Perez, The Journal of the American Medical Association published [a paper in 2019](#) finding that individuals who spent any time in restricted housing were 78 percent more likely to die by suicide in the first year after release than their formerly incarcerated peers who never spent time in solitary. The realities at Parchman are a clarion call for all of us to replace isolated confinement with treatment and rehabilitation."

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 300 religious organizations have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

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