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## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | March 19, 2017

Lawyers for Joaquin El Chapo Guzman, who is currently held in solitary confinement in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City, have filed papers asking that their client be transferred to general population and be granted visiting privileges to speak to his wife. [According to CNN](#), During the week, Guzman spends 23 hours a day in a small cell with no windows. He is allowed one hour of solitary exercise in a separate cell that holds one treadmill and one stationary bicycle. It is on the way to this exercise room, as he walks by a small window, that Guzman gets a fleeting view of the outside world.

A 101-page investigation released Friday concludes that corrections officers who locked a schizophrenic inmate in a hot shower at Dade Correctional Institution and left him there for nearly two hours until realizing he was dead committed no crime, reported [the Miami Herald](#). Darren Rainey died in 2012. At the time he was being held in a form of solitary confinement for people with mental illness called a Transitional Care Unit.

A [New Mexico bill](#) aimed to restrict the use of solitary confinement in the states prisons and jails now just needs to be signed by the Governor to become law. The legislation would ban pregnant women and children from being placed in solitary confinement, and also place restricts on when people with mental illness can be placed in isolation.

The head of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, A.T. Wall, [has said that he does not support](#) legislative efforts to reduce the use of solitary confinement. If for example the amount of time that somebody can spend in a particular status is enacted in statute, then it prohibits us from responding to exigent circumstances, he said. Lawmakers in the state are shortly expected to recommended changes to the use of isolation.

A federal court [has ruled](#) that a group of people locked up in Illinois had alleged sufficient facts to prove that the extreme isolation prisoners are subjected to in solitary confinement violates the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment of the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The six named plaintiffs have been in solitary confinement for between 6 months and 17 years, and are seeking to have the lawsuit certified as a class action on behalf of all those facing extreme isolation in the state.

The Utah Legislature has [set aside \\$3 million](#) in hopes of resolving an ongoing federal lawsuit, which alleges that people with mental illness endure long periods of time in jail, sometimes in solitary confinement, because the state does not have enough hospital beds for treatment. These individuals have all been declared incompetent to stand trial and been ordered into treatment by the court.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Washington has brought a lawsuit against Grays Harbor County, alleging that a teenager was repeatedly held in solitary confinement between 2013 and 2016. According to a [local outlet](#), the young man allegedly spent a total of 75 days locked in a room or in a padded cell with little human interaction or access to his mother. During a particular eight-day stretch, he was allegedly locked in a room spattered with food and blood, with a feces-covered grate over a hole in the ground to use for a toilet.

A New York man formerly incarcerated upstate has [filed a lawsuit](#) alleging he was sent to solitary confinement and locked up for an extra year after a guard planted a shank in his shoe. Thomas Ozzborn, 28, took a guilty plea on the weapons charge rather than face a possible 15-year prison term. He was released last month after prosecutors acknowledged that the corrections officer had planted weapons on someone else.

[The Nashville Scene](#) published an investigation into the 2010 death of Charles Jason Toll, after he was forcibly extracted from his solitary confinement cell at the Riverbend Maximum Security Institution. The reporter asks, If Jason Toll had been diagnosed as mentally ill earlier, would he have died at the hands of guards at Riverbend?

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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I like being alone some times.

P.O. Box 11374  
Washington, DC 20008

[info@solitarywatch.org](mailto:info@solitarywatch.org)

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