

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | July 30, 2017

A Maine Superior Court judge has ruled that a prisoners length of stay in solitary confinement [amounted to an atypical and significant hardship](#). Douglass Burr spent almost two years in isolation at the Special Management Unit at Maine Street Prison for allegedly presenting a security risk. In Maine, the longest someone can be held in the box on disciplinary (as opposed to security) grounds is 30 days.

[Mother Jones](#) published an in-depth look at how North Dakota is trying to learn from Norways decidedly different approach to incarceration. After returning from touring the Norwegian prison system, ND prisons chief Leann Bertsch revamped the states use of isolation. Now, solitary stints are short, with clear expectations for how to get out, and the emphasis has shifted from punishment to treatment. Long-isolated prisoners are no longer dumped back into the general population a new behavioral therapy unit gives them time to adjust to being around people.

Air conditioning has been failing at the womens prison in Nashville. Inmates who are elderly or taking medications like Xanax, and those in solitary confinement are specifically susceptible to high temperatures, Alex Friedmann, associate director of the Human Rights Defense Center and managing editor of Prison Legal News, told [the Tennessean](#). They cant open a window to get some breeze. There are no open windows.

[ProPublica](#) reported on the Enhanced Supervision Housing Units (ESHU) on Rikers Island, which were created as alternatives to solitary for young adults who are said to be violent. Young people are allowed to leave their solitary cells to attend class, but must be shackled during that time and according to a report recently released by the New York City Board of Corrections, despite being chained to desks the young adults in the ESHU are still vulnerable to attack. When the Board voted to end solitary confinement for men and women under 22, we did not vote to chain people to desks, one Board member said in an email to ProPublica. The Department of Correction misrepresents reality when it says that shackling mens legs and chaining them together so they cant move is not punishment.

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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