

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2014/10/21/voices-from-solitary-survivors-speak/>

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close

Search

close

close

by [Voices from Solitary](#) | October 21, 2014

The American Friends Service Committee has a long history of advocating for the rights of the incarcerated, and against injustice and abuse in U.S. prisons, jails, and detention centers. Recently, AFSC released a report called [Survivors Speak: Prisoner Testimonies of Torture in United States Prisons and Jails](#). The document was prepared as a Shadow Report to the official U.S. Periodic Report on its adherence to the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), which is further explained in [this earlier post](#).

In the executive summary to the report, AFSC writes:

The list of abuses committed against U.S. prisoners is long and deeply distressing: sexual violence, humiliation, unsanitary conditions, extreme temperatures, insufficiently nutritious food, inadequate medical care, isolation, psychological torture, racism, chemical abuse and disproportionate uses of force. These are just a sample of experiences you will read about in these first-hand accounts from individuals living in jails and prisons throughout the United States.

Other civil society shadow reports addressing corrections conditions feature legal analysis, data illustrating the prevalence of ill treatment committed against prisoners and insights from experts. This shadow report supplements those crucial examinations by bringing the human experience to bear. Statistics are helpful in understanding the ways in which the U.S. prison system is fundamentally broken. Yet even the best charts are unable to fully convey the reality of what it is like to live through breaches of CAT obligations. These are their testimonials verbatim of inhuman conditions under which they are held, abuses that irrevocably change their lives.

What follows is a selection of testimonies from the section of the report that deals with prison isolation. Thanks to Bonnie Kerness of AFSC's Prison Watch program for forwarding this material to Solitary Watch. Jean Casella

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None of the locks on cell doors work which resulted in the death of 5 prisoners in one month We are supposed to get an hour a day outside our cell but thats not true in Georgia. We gone [sic] months without seeing the sunlight with nothing to read but a bible. Prisoner suicide has tripled and its a medical fact that everyone has lost weight in this program. J.H., Hayes State Prison, Trion, GA, 2014

They called it a 23 hour lockdown, but during the hour out, you had no other human contact- not even staff As you are aware we are made to eat and sleep in a concrete and steel bathroom In my particular case they never turned off the light. My window was covered on the outside with some type of white plastic so that we could not attempt any type of visual communication with whatever may have been out there. D.L., Plymouth County Correctional Facility, Plymouth, MA, 2014

I have been in solitary since 1998. From 1998-2005 I was held on High Risk Potential which in part includes zero staff and/or inmate contact, no group activities, no program participation, stripped of privileges (e.g. phone, canteen, contact visits, hobby craft, inter alia), and escorted with arm and leg restraints that have a dog leash attached to them during any movement. In 2005 I was removed from the HRP status and Disciplinary Segregation, but placed on Administrative Segregation. Im still stripped of privileges, staff and/or inmate contact, no group activities, no program participation and in-cell confinement for 23 hours a day. I also only get to shower every 3 days. G.P., Ely State Prison, Ely, NV, 2014

First and I feel most importantly is the solitary confinement at the last prison I was at. It is a dungeon like setting. Dark, no windows, you go weeks and months sometimes not seeing light. These are dangerous and unsupervised for the most part. Men are put in these cells with other men which fight and get injured without anyone knowing for hours on end I have seen several times inmate getting beat while in cuffs or ganged up by a number of officers C.M., Staton Correctional Center, Elmore, AL, 2014

The conditions were very inhumane hot, no working vents at all stuffy and humid my first cell bugs were biting me all over my body, when I said something about it they (the medical staff) played like I was crazy then finally after constant complaining they gave me Benadryl then moved me and still didnt clean the cell. They had a light on all day that felt like a rotisserie lamp. It was hard to sleep because of the hot humid cells and constant bugs biting me all day and night we had no cups to drink the brown colored water that came out of the sinks and toilets. There was constant screaming yelling kicking and banging (with objects on doors to multiply the sound on

the doors). A.S.A., SCI Dallas Restricted Housing Unit (confinement), Jackson Township, PA 2014

I have basically been in seg64 housing unit and while being here the guards have tormented and encouraged me to cut myself and even specified jugular, carotid arteries, and have taunted me every time I have cut my wrist arteries, saying that I did not do it to their satisfaction and have threatened to beat me to a pulp. G.C., Wapun Correctional Institution, Wapun, WI, 2014

Its hard to explain the multitude of little factors that induce stress, anxiety, frustration, and depressionMy best attempt to describe prolonged isolation in a supermax prison is that its like Chinese water torture. A single drop may not harm you but the millions of little drops of stress, anxiety, uncertainty, depression, and sorrow build up until you can begin to feel your mind breaking. I wish I could explain it better. Maybe then people could understand and wouldnt allow this hell to continue. J.D., Tamms Correctional Center, Tamms IL, 2009

Ive been in the (hole) for three years and now so paranoid that I cant be around people. I cant even sleep in a cell with someone else even if I knew him all my life. Ive tried every treatment, medication possible, no helpI am now so paranoid I cant even be on the yards. Even in a lock [sic] cell, a lock [sic] shower, a lock [sic] rec cage, Im still paranoid so how is it going to be on the streets when I am around others? Ive really tried to work on it but nothing at all works even the medications. So all I ask is, is this place really need[ed]. J.H., Federal Correctional Complex, Oakdale SMU, Oakdale, LA, 2010

A suicide attempt. Thats what happened to me during my time in solitary. A serious, legitimate suicide attempt. I suffer of [sic] schizophrenia and while I was in segregation all I had to talk to was the voices in my head While in solitary I was electrocuted due to faulty wiring. After that everything just went downhill for me. Every day I talked to delusions more and more. It got to the point that I did whatever the voices told me. Eventually I decided that was no way to live and chose to try to kill myself. I was found in my room passed out and cover [sic] in blood. The next morning I went right back into trying to kill myself as soon as [sic] woke up. I tried to kill myself by diving into a metal stool I suffer of brain damage If I would [sic] had daily conversations with otherpeople, I would have not interacted with delusions. Delusions that led me to try to kill myself. D.A., Central New Mexico Correctional Facility, Los Lunas, NM, 2014

This term [in solitary confinement] I have been in a little over 4 years straight, but overall most of the past 15 years After doing a substantial amount of time inside alone, then being released is shocking. It is a blast for a few days then the people, colors, sounds, touching, movement, kids, cars, and social interactions become way too much, kind of like over-stimulation of the senses, it gets really uncomfortable around everyone and everything, so much that it usually takes alcohol or drugs to feel comfortable. R.T., Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, CA, 2014

Even now, six months out of the hole I still remain affected. I withdraw from social interaction/setting. I feel frustrated for no apparent reason. Possibly the most damaging aspect of segregation is the sense of powerlessness. You can yell, scream, report misconduct and abuse to prison officials to no avail. B.S., Jefferson City Correctional Center, Jefferson City, MO, 2010

The Voices from Solitary series publishes dispatches from people surviving the lived experience of solitary confinement.

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 [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 30, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 19, 2022

by [Voices from Solitary](#)

September 6, 2022

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Im looking forward to reading your writings . Im so sorry for your suffering in solitary confinement. Putting people in solitary is so CRUEL. Two of my friends killed themselves in solitary. Both were mentally ill and were confined in solitary for years. I doubt Ill ever recover from the rage I feel for the prison staff that drove my friends to their deaths.

1. These psych labels are nonsense. Prisoners are made to think they are mentally ill by atheist mental health people who tell them that hearing voices is hallucinations, so then they get distressed about that. However, it is not hallucinations, Both God and demons speak to people in our thoughts. God brings peace. Demons say negative things and provoke people to hurt themselves or others or feel hopeless etc the REMEDY is to simply ignore the demons or rebuke the in Jesus name. Singing to God drowns them out. Prisoners need a booklet explaining this The psych drugs make them worse they cause homicide and suicide and make it hard to think clearly, open them to demonic spirits and unable to pray. People have a RIGHT TO BIBLES THIS is the solution it is cruel and unusual punishment to not have one. Having one gives GOD authority instead of demons. ALSO they should have an instrument -a guitar if they are not suicidal and a kitten. and BET LET OUT ONCE A DAY FOR MEALS WITH OTHERS. this WOULD THEN TRAIN THEM IN MINISTRY SO

THEY CAN MINISTER TO OTHERS AND WARN THEM AWAY FROM WHATEVER MISTAKES THEY MADE EVERYONES MISTAKES ARE PART OF THEIR TESTIMONY OF WHAT THEY WERE LIKE BEFORE JESUS HEALED THEM. THE GOVERNOR SHOULD OFFER ALL PRISONERS PAROLE REGARDLESS OF ORIGINAL SENTENCE NOBODY SHOULD HAVE MORE THAN 2-4 YEARS SENTENCE THAT IS LONG ENOUGH TO READ THE BIBLE, LEARN TO PRAY AND BE TRANSFORMED. all the guards should also have bibles and see their jobs as ministry. those who are brutal can be given the opportunity to repent, just like the prisoners, and be useful instead, otherwise they can find another job. If everyone as bibles, Gods spirit will bring peace there and the violence will go way down on both sides.

I spent 8 months in solitary in a psych ward of a prison it was a taste of hell, I did not have a bible so demons harangued me more. It is NORMAL CHRISTIAN theology to hear voices. Jesus said my sheep hear my voice John 10:27

It was spiritual bootcamp GOD used it to train me in how to resist the devils attempts to abort my prayers. When I got out God said use what youve learned I was already a Christian going in so I knew the voices were not hallucinations.

Everyone hears voices as thoughts in our heads. THEY come from the spiritual realm THE word INSPIRATION means A SPIRIT GOES INTO IT.

Prior to this God had sent me into the psych system to be a witness against their atheism and genocide by psych drugs which are deadly by design. Psych wards drug everyone THAT is torture. I know many who died from them I almost did. A person is better off in jail where they can think and pray and have fellowship with God. God had me write a book about the psych system, free on my website

<http://www.1prophetspeaks.com>

Manual for Transformational Healing-Gods Answer to psychiatry

see articles, free books, music

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com> articles in most recent order

Spiritual bootcamp my experience in solitary launching prayers

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com/2014/02/spiritual-bootcamp-my-experience-in.html>

THIS VISION for Rikers IS DESCRIBED IN MY ARTICLE

ERIC GARNER GOT JUSTICE WE NEED THE RIKERS SCHOOL OF MINISTRY FORGIVENESS NOT JUSTICE

<http://www.1prophetspeaks7.blogspot.com/2014/12/eric-garner-got-justice.html>

So well expressed, Masteradrian. You know, I maintain that some of the mentally strongest, disciplined individuals in our society are those who can actually survive such prolonged solitary conditions without absolutely breaking. It sometimes amazes me how beautifully they express themselves. Shouldnt such strength of character be worth something as far as improvement in their conditions? Havent they earned something more than they have? Why cant we develop a penal system that encourages better conditions through good behavior of all kinds? Their crimes have taken their freedom in society away from them. Isnt incarceration enough? What more do we want from them? We are a wonderful society that has somewhat lost its way when it comes to penal humanity and reform of solitary conditions. Were I to be confined and treated as they are for prolonged periods of time, I think I would probably fall into severe depression and ultimately crack with time.

God bless you, AFSC, for your work. Id be happy to join your group.

Putting human beings with their principally need for inter-human contact is per definition inhumane, torture and must be labeled criminal!

The effects it has on human beings so utterly devastating that a normal human being will never be able to adapt to anything once released into the normal society!

Were people are, as described, in solitary confinement for sometimes months these people loose every basic human connection with reality that every interaction with other human beings AFTER release from this solitary confinement is almost impossible, and that is why these people are unable to create inter-human contacts and relations again, and thus return for whatever reason to the solitary confinement, adding to the further loss of human abilities to interact with others

The practice of solitary confinement is basically and principally inhumane, especially were the people are NOT sentenced to the extra punishment of solitary confinement, but is a punishment of the prison, simply decided upon by wardens, guards and others who in fact are doing what judges are supposed to do.. sentencing people to additional punishments!

Anyone who is allowing, enforcing and condoning solitary confinement is guilty of dehumanizing human beings, and should be removed from the positions they are in, namely to be able to punish people in ways and means that are criminal!

Society MUST stand up and fight solitary confinement, as it creates human beings who become animals by and through what is done to them!

If that is what American Justice is, then American Justice has lost its values and norms, and must be ended!

My opinion!

P.O. Box 11374

Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

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