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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | March 24, 2019

KFOX14 [reported](#) that Jasvir Singh reached his 77th day of hunger strike, protesting against his prolonged detention at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) El Paso Processing Center in Texas. Though Singh is seeking asylum, he has been placed in solitary confinement and force-fed by officials at the facility. The Director of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center said, [Singh] knows that he faces certain death if he continues to strike and he knows that he also faces death if he's deported back to his home country. Singh is one of the last remaining hunger strikers at the facility, after officials began force-feeding the protesters last month.

WSVN [reported](#) that people with psychiatric disabilities continue to face conditions of severe isolation at the Broward County jail in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. One 32-year-old man, after spending nearly five months in solitary confinement, used a shaving razor to slice off his testicles and flushed them down the toilet, proclaiming, I have no need for it anymore. Attorney Greg Lauer said, This is what happens when a mentally ill individual is placed in solitary confinement and isn't given any treatment of any sort. Lauer said that every single one of the five people he represented who died at Broward was in solitary confinement. While the Broward Sheriff's Office has claimed to improve the treatment of people with psychiatric disabilities, WSVN has not received an answer to what changes the county has made.

Huntington News [reported](#) that last month, about 70 detained immigrants held a hunger strike at the Suffolk County House of Corrections in Massachusetts, lasting from February 15 until February 20. The strike, protesting inhumane conditions at the jail, ended after at least four participants were placed in solitary confinement and later transferred to a different facility. The detained immigrants, housed alongside incarcerated American citizens, claimed to be denied basic privileges that nonimmigrants were afforded, such as recreation time and access to books. While the strike resulted in some changes for the immigrants, including access to hot water and more fruit, many of the demands were not met.

Robert Earl Council, known as Kinetik Justice Amun, engaged in a one-week hunger strike beginning March 7 after being put in solitary confinement at Holman Correctional Facility in Alabama, allegedly without any altercation, investigation, or disciplinary infraction, Council [told Shadowproof](#). Council said he asked the three wardens why he was isolated and, All three affirmed that they are just following orders from the Commissioner. Active in the Free Alabama Movement for the rights of incarcerated people, Council has faced retaliation in past years for his prison organizing, including one stint of 54 days in solitary following labor strikes in 2014 at Holman. On March 14, Council ended his hunger strike after reaching an agreement with the corrections department to release him back to general population.

Newsweek [reported](#) that at least seventeen immigrant parents have yet to be reunited with their children since the Trump administration's zero tolerance policy was enforced at the U.S.-Mexico border. Though a court order called for the reunification of all families separated under the policy, the advocacy organization Al Otro Lado has received reports from these seventeen parents of horrible treatment from Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Al Otro Lado compiled a video quoting one mother saying, They told me not to cry or they'll throw me in solitary confinement. Another mother said, I'm desperate. I want to be with my daughter already because she is also in detention. I am frightened that she may attempt to take her life again, which she already tried once.

Project Q Magazine [reported](#) that Chin Tsui, a transgender man held at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Irwin County Detention Center in Georgia, has been kept in solitary confinement for fifteen months, denied medical care, and denied his medications. An advocate said, There's a variety of things that are happening that are driving Chin to want to harm himself. It's impossible to live. You're in a solitary confinement space, you're not talking to anyone and on top of that, you're not getting the right medication. Last May, a transgender woman died nine days after arriving at a New Mexico ICE facility, showing signs of extensive hemorrhaging in the autopsy, possibly evidence of physical abuse.

The *Des Moines Register* [reported](#) that a judge ruled in favor of class action status for a lawsuit filed in 2017, claiming that the excessive use of isolation and mechanical restraints at Iowa State Training School for Boys violated the constitution and damages youths' mental health. A report found that two-thirds of the children at the facility faced solitary confinement at any given time and that between 2011 and 2017, the facility's use of restraints increased by nearly five times. The lawsuit says that children are being held in filthy, foul-smelling seclusion cells for all but one hour a day and calls for the state to improve the mental health care for youth at the facility and

eliminate the use of isolation and the mechanical restraint device they call the wrap.

The *Vermont Digger* [reported](#) that former correctional officer Cameron Morin faces felony charges of sexually assaulting a man previously incarcerated at Southern State Correctional Facility Springfield, Vermont. The man claims Morin used his authority to coerce him into performing oral sex under the threat of getting him dragged, which is slang for being forced into solitary confinement, according to the lawsuit. Morin, additionally charged with bringing contraband into the facility, was arrested in January and placed on temporary leave, though he resigned the following month. Morin pleaded not guilty to the charges, and his attorney responded no comment to whether Morin denied having sexual contact with the plaintiff.

[According](#) to *SF Gate*, the trial for a lawsuit filed in 2016 on behalf of the Prisoners United collective against Santa Clara County was set to close last week. The county had agreed to a \$1.6 million settlement in October as well as a plan to address the lawsuits concerns. The Remedial Plan aimed to provide proper health care, suicide prevention, and improved medical evaluation upon arrival at the facility. In a public court comment Thursday, however, the attorneys who filed the lawsuit called for further improvements, including the elimination of solitary confinement. The lawsuit followed the death of Michael Tyree in 2015. Tyree, who struggled with mental illness, was allegedly beat to death by prison guards, three of whom were convicted in relation to the incident years later.

The *New Yorker* published a [piece](#) examining the discriminatory treatment of detained immigrants in the United States, who make up ten percent of the federal prison population. At the Reeves County Detention Center in Texas, for instance, an ACLU report in 2014 found that the contract with GEO Group, the private prison company operating the facility, specified that ten percent of the cells must be isolated twice the amount of solitary generally used across the rest of the federal correctional facilities. In 2008, the death of 32-year-old Jesus Manuel Galindo sparked riots at Reeves, since he died after being placed in solitary and denied medication for his epileptic seizures. GEO Group, along with two other private prison companies, operate ten of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities across the country without the same systems of accountability as regular Bureau of Prisons facilities, according to an ACLU attorney.

Valerie Kiebal was a contributing writer and editorial and project manager for Solitary Watch, and is now the media director of Straight Ahead, which is building a decarceration movement throughout Pennsylvania. Her work has also appeared in *The Root*, *Truthout*, the *Chicago Reporter*, and *Shadowproof*.

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.

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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