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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | May 25, 2014



The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past week that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

A Texas woman has [filed a lawsuit](#) alleging that in 2012, she was forced to give birth in solitary confinement without medical assistance, leading to her baby's death. Nicole Guerrero was being held at the Wichita County Jail on drug charges when she went into labor; according to her account, the nurse on staff ignored her screams and pleas for help as the contractions intensified. A correctional officer eventually helped her deliver the infant, but the umbilical cord was wrapped around her neck and no efforts were made to resuscitate her.

[An appeals court has denied a request](#) by a man held in solitary confinement continuously for the past 30 years to be released into general population. Thomas Silverstein, 62, was alleged to be a leader of the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang. He is currently incarcerated at ADX Florence, the federal supermax in Colorado.

The [Associated Press](#) has uncovered grisly details in the death of another person held in solitary confinement on Rikers Island. In September 2013, Bradley Ballard was found naked and covered in feces in his cell at the jail, with his genitals mutilated and infected. He died several hours later in the hospital. Ballard was a diagnosed schizophrenic and had allegedly been denied his medication.

Five corrections officers at a New York state prison have [been placed on administrative leave](#) following an internal investigation into claims that they forced individuals held in solitary confinement to fight each other. The guards at Greene Correctional Facility also allegedly went to great lengths to scare the prisoners out of filing complaints, according to one source even threatening prisoners by placing plastic bags over their heads.

After spending 48 hours in solitary confinement in the late spring, New Mexico Department of Corrections Cabinet Secretary Gregg Marcantel has reportedly [begun making changes](#) to the way the practice operates in the state. According to news sources, 60-80 individuals have been moved from isolation into general population since Marcantel spent two days in the highest security cell at the State Penitentiary in Santa Fe.

Martin Horn, the former Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction, has written a blog for [The Crime Report](#) questioning whether the extreme conditions of confinement endured by alleged Boston bomber Dzhokar Tsarnaev are justifiable. Tsarnaev is being held in almost complete isolation from the outside world.

[ThinkProgress](#) has reported that despite claims to the contrary, those incarcerated in Charlestown when 10,000 gallons of chemicals leaked into West Virginia's water supply were not supplied with sufficient clean water. Prisoners reported that they were given as little as 16 oz of water a day, and also said that the medical segregation unit became so full that that sick inmates were sent to disciplinary segregation instead. In interviews, current and former inmates also reported that they were punished with lockdown or solitary confinement after staging protests to demand more clean water.

A British, Egyptian-born imam [was convicted in New York](#) on 11 terrorism-related charges. Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, commonly known as Abu Hamza, was extradited to the US in 2014 with four other terrorism suspects after a long battle in UK and European courts, in which the defendants argued that the long-term solitary confinement they would likely face if convicted amounted to torture. A sixth

individual, Haroon Aswat, is still awaiting a decision on whether he will be extradited. [The Daily Mail](#) (UK) published an article about the conditions at ADX Florence, where Abu Hamza may serve his sentence.

[The Durango Herald](#) published a long-form article on why people with mental illness in Colorado often end up in solitary confinement in the states jails.

According to a recent article in [The New York Times](#), assaults on civilian staff at Rikers Island have increased by 144% since July 1, 2013, the start of the fiscal year. Some have claimed that the rise in assaults is at least partially due to changes in the way Rikers manages people with mental illness, including reducing the use of solitary confinement.

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](#).

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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Dzhokar Tsarnaev deserves everything they throw his way!

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