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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/10/15/pennsylvania-prisoners-charged-with-rioting-after-protesting-conditions-in-solitary/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | October 15, 2011

A group of inmates held in solitary confinement in a Pennsylvania prison have been charged with various felony offenses, including rioting and aggravated harassment, stemming from their participation in an April 2010 protest against prison abuses. The group, which has come to be known as the Dallas 6, covered the windows of their cell doors with bedding in protest of alleged harassment by correctional officers at the State Correctional Institution (SCI) Dallas. Their protest was met with violent cell extractions against all six inmates. Officially, the covering of the cell windows constituted an act which *coerced* correctional officials to perform cell extractions, therefore making their actions rioting.

According to Human Rights Coalition-Fed Up! investigator Bret Grote, there will be a hearing before Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Judge Nina Gartley on October 21st regarding a defense motion to consolidate the cases of four of the Dallas 6s cases into a single case. The hearing involves Andre Jacobs, Carrington Keys, Derrick Stanley, and Duane Peters-El, four of the five members of the Dallas 6 who have yet to have their cases resolved. (Anthony Kelly accepted a plea bargain last year, and Anthony Locke will be tried separately). The four are currently held at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility. Carrington Keys was set to go to trial on October 17th, but the trial has been postponed to a later, undetermined date.

The alleged abuses against inmates that inspired the protest are, according to some, reflective of a widespread problem in the Pennsylvania prison system. The [most dramatic allegations](#) surfaced last month, when a suspended prison guard from SCI Pittsburgh was arrested on charges that he sexually or physically assaulted more than 20 inmates. Earlier reports suggest less extreme, but nonetheless serious abuses at other prisons.

As of August 31, 2011 there were [51,393 inmates](#) under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, in a system with a designed capacity of 44,190. Among them are over 1,500 inmates in isolation units referred to as Restricted Housing Units. Restricted Housing Units are solitary confinement units where inmates are kept in their cells 23 hours a day during the week and 24 hours on the weekends.

For ten months between 2009 and 2010, the Human Rights Coalition-Fed Up! worked on a report documenting abuses across Pennsylvania prisons, but most specifically at SCI Dallas. A medium security prison in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, SCI Dallas houses over 2,100 inmates, including over a hundred inmates in Disciplinary and Administrative Restricted Housing Units.

According to the 2010 report by the Human Rights Coalition-Fed Up! [Institutionalized Cruelty: Torture at SCI Dallas and in Prisons Throughout Pennsylvania](#), written with extensive cooperation of inmates, SCI Dallas was particularly rife with abuses. Among them, the frequent usage of racist slurs, threats of violence, verbal and physical abuse by guards, retaliation against prisoners exercising their constitutional rights to file grievances, and failure to provide adequate or at times any, physical or mental health care.

One prisoner who corresponded with the HRC described his experience in the RHU at SCI Dallas:

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 (medical staff) played like I was crazy then finally after constant complaining they gave me benadryl then moved me and still didn't 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

The 93 page report includes extensive case studies and descriptions by inmates of the psychological torment of solitary confinement, racism, violence, and various other abuses at SCI Dallas. One detailed description of the psychologically detrimental effects of solitary confinement in the RHUs cited in the report can be [read here](#).

The report was released in April 2010. RHU inmate Andre Jacobs, who had corresponded with HRC and whose testimonial appeared in the report, was sent a copy of the report. [On April 25th](#), RHU inmate Derrick Stanley reported hearing a member of the security staff tell Jacobs that he just got something really interesting from Fed Up.

At some point on the 25th, inmate Anthony Kelly, who had contributed to the HRC report, had food withheld from him. Fellow inmate Isaac Sanchez spoke out against the withholding of food, and subsequently Sanchez's dinner was withheld. On May 2nd, Anthony Kelly wrote that as of 4/25/10 I haven't had a sip of water and only 2 baloney sandwiches. They cut off your water and see how long you go before they can break you. They starve you. He also wrote that the report was being circulated among correctional officers, and that they had since been on a very vicious roll.

On April 28th, three days after the withholding of meals from Kelly and Sanchez, Sanchez was the target of a cell extraction. As the HRC report describes it:

A cell-extraction is when guards equipped in riot gear and armed with pepper spray and electro-shock weapons forcibly enter a cell in order to overwhelm a prisoner, place them in hand and leg restraints, and move them to another cell by force.

Sanchez was, in his own words, violently beaten and shocked for sometime, then I was placed on the restraint chair for sixteen hours.

The following day, six prisoners, many of whom had contributed to the HRC report, covered the windows of their cells in protest.

We covered our windows to obstruct count, refused to answer them, barricaded our doors closed and forced cell-extractions, according to a letter from Andre Jacobs cited in the August 2010 HRC report.

Andre Jacobs, Anthony Kelly, Carrington Keys, Anthony Locke, Derrick Stanley, and Duane Peters-El were all subjected to violent cell extractions the same day. All were tasered, many more than a dozen times, as well as pepper sprayed and beaten. Pages 10-16 of HRCs [August 2010 report](#) on the six provide background on the inmates as well as descriptions of their injuries.

According to the criminal complaints, filed July 7th, 2010, all six inmates were charged with rioting. The complaints read:

Riot-A Person is guilty if he participates with two or more others in a course of disorderly conduct with the intent to coerce official action. To wit; the defendant, along with five other inmates, covered their cell door windows and tied their doors shut in order to cause Corrections Officers to perform cell extractions.

In the Affidavit of Probable Cause (against Duane Peters):

On April 29, 2010, the defendant and other inmates lead by I/M Keys, I/M Locke, I/M Kelly and I/M Jacobs covered their cell door windows in order to require them to be extracted from the cells. The defendant, while housed in the RHU, also barricaded his cell door, along with five other inmates, and refused several orders to remove the items. This caused the use of the cell extraction team. When the extraction team attempted to remove the defendant he resisted and attempted to assault the officers after they entered.

According to a September 2010 [news story](#) from Luzerne County regarding a preliminary hearing for Carrington Keys:

On April 29, the men hung bedsheets to keep guards from peering into their cells and used the cloth to secure their doors shut, said Trooper Christopher Wilson. When an extraction team entered the cells, he said six guards were pelted with feces and urine.

In testimony, Lt. David Mosier, who heads the extraction team, said he gave numerous warnings to Keys and said guards would raid the cells if the bedding wasn't taken down.

He refused all orders, Mosier said. At that point I ordered the extraction team to enter.

The section referring to the guards pelted with feces and urine is a reference to additional charges against Carrington Keys, who denies those charges.

The charge of Aggravated Harassment by Prisoner against Keys, in the July 7th criminal complaint, reads:

A person is guilty if while confined in or committed to any local or county detention facility, jail or prison or any State penal or correctional institution or other State penal or correctional facility located in this Commonwealth, he intentionally or knowingly causes or attempts to cause another to come into contact with saliva or feces by throwing, tossing, spitting or expelling such fluid or material. To wit; the defendant threw feces at and on the extraction team; the victims are employees of the State Correctional Institution in Dallas.

One inconsistency in the charges against Keys is that, had there been an incident in which excrement had been thrown at the officers, there would have been a decontamination process (which there is no evidence of), rather than the continuation of cell extractions immediately after Keysextraction.

In a hearing on [November 12th, 2010](#):

State police Cpl. Christopher Wilson called the three corrections officers to testify. They said the six inmates were given several orders to remove the coverings from their cell doors a violation of the prisons code and didn't comply.

The officers testified they then removed the six men from their cells to search them.

Something serious was going on, said Sgt. Donald Buck, an officer at SCI-Dallas. It was a security and safety issue.

Originally charged as a group, the six were eventually split up into six individual cases. Their actions were deemed a safety issue which, as the complaints read, served to coerce official action, with the cell extractions being the official action coerced by the inmates.

As of October 4th, 2011, Anthony Kelly accepted a plea bargain (the details of which are unknown) in November 2010 and has since been released. All of the remaining inmates have remained in solitary confinement units. Anthony Locke has not been in contact with HRC-Fed Up! nor any Dallas 6 support groups.

Duane Peters and Carrington Keys are currently representing themselves. Keys, in July 2010, filed a suit against the district attorney for ignoring complaints. In September 2010 the suit was moved from state to federal court, where Keys was asked to amend his complaint against the District Attorney. He added complaints of being retaliated against and asked the federal government to issue a restraining against the District Attorney, a move which was subsequently denied.

Since the incident in April 2010, Andre Jacobs has been transferred to three facilities. The first facility where he was transferred immediately after the cell extraction was SCI Coal Township where, on August 2nd [according to over a dozen reports](#) from inmates, food was withheld from him because he liked to file paperwork. After protesting the withholding of meals, he was subsequently removed from the cell while guards removed the mattress and personal belongings and was returned to an empty cell and was reportedly denied meals for an extended period of time afterwards. He was later sent to SCI Huntington and then SCI Rockview. Jacobs is currently in the Luzerne County prison for pretrial hearings represented by a public attorney who Jacobs has attempted to fire so that he may represent himself, but so far this move has not been allowed by the court.

For more information, supporters of the Dallas 6 maintain [a blog](#).

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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ok now i not saying whats going on in CA should be any right to exsues thare rong doing but i am going to say if any state that should be ashamed for still using solitary it dam well is PA you really should know beter Pa you of any dam state you have the reminder of it right in your capital you cant tell me you all forgot ESP did you forget you where the ones who wanted to help inmates be beter that that was the hole thout of esp and if any thing did you not lern from ESP that solitary dose not work i would think you did or at least ESP did lern from itself it ended those ways and to me is the only prison or i should say pennitenarey that did go on to lern from it self it gave up solitary and then whent on to help meny inmates be better off in the end it stands as the only pure shard of justice in the hole prison nashion that we have built in the end it was not the men who made the rules but the gards and some of the wardens who hurt the good runings of ESP and so i would have to say if any state you dam well should know better then to be one using solitary and two to treat the inmate in your care so badly you took the usa out of corpal punishment now you may not be using a whip but you in meny ways are thowing your state and seting a bad one for other to follow right back in to saying it is ok to do such things agan you worked so hard to end that years a go what is rong with you even over the years ESP the hart of it is more pure then you and your docs are still and now do you know how meny sickly try to call esp the first supermax or the start of it but they can not it was trying to help inmates unlike supermaxes that seek only to house them alone to get rid of them in other prisons not to help so you see your not only bring shame to your state acting like this your shameing the good mane of ESP and of the hole goel you ones held so dear care for those under your care and you may just get better inmates at the least more good outcomes meny sya esp was a failyer i do not think it was i think it shows us solitary dose not work but give them a life inside work to do desent food to eat care for mind and body suprot from those outside and thare loved ones and you will get better inmates by the time thare out in moest cases the way ESP was at the end of its life if anything is what a prison should be now i think that in the end it was a succsess it did work out the bad runings in itself and in the end did good for meny what ESP tot us is how a good prison should run what really works wich is why you dam well should know beter PA this is not how you should be treating your inmates you need to go back to your real core and find the good pure hart agan you need to take all that ESP showed you after it adbanded solitary and you need to take a good look and then when you see the hart of it as i do and you see the love and the careing and the hope the way it ran the way it worked lived as one city within a city ones you see that light you need to share it with the rest of your docs prisons and fix this sick mess your making of your state s name and bring back that careing kind helpfal PA that ones was so loved by all this nashion you tried to lead i think you still can if only you get the dam point PA till then your only bring shame to this nashion your state and everything ESP stood for from the day it was built and that is just sick shameful and really sad to see you doing this may thare be light in the darknes of justice

I have been in prison, in a cell, where we were housed as ad-seg overflow in Wasco D yard building 5, where we werent getting what the state of California madates as humane treatment. We werent getting the min 3 showers a week or cosmetics or any time out of the cell for months! So we disrupted count by boarding up-covering the windows. <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0056C0LW4>
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B005G5YMTE>
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0051678MO> I write novels about it now to stay sane!

Thank you for writing about the injustice done in PA prisons!

We have a support website and facebook page for the Dallas 6:

Scidallas6.org (Friends of the Dallas 6) and:

<https://www.facebook.com/AndreTheGift>

Free the Dallas 6! Peaceful non-violent protesters violently beaten by police.

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Solitary Watch

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