

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/02/23/bradley-manning-marks-1000-days-in-pre-trial-detention/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | February 23, 2013

As of today, alleged Wikileaker Bradley Manning has been held without trial for 1,000 days. More than nine months of that time was spent in solitary confinement in the Marine brig in Quantico, Virginia. To mark the date, we recommend reading Chase Madars book [The Passion of Bradley Manning](#), next best, the long excerpt from the book that was published last fall by the Brooklyn Rail under the title [The Torture of Bradley Manning](#). Parts of that excerpt follow, but it deserves to be read in full (and not only because he kindly cites Solitary Watch). Madar is one of the very few to point out that Mannings treatment was deeply rooted in the norms of the U.S. criminal justice system.

By July 29, Pfc. Manning was detained at Quantico Marine Corps brig on Prevention of Injury watch: 23 hours of solitary confinement a day, with a ban on push-ups and sit-ups in the cell, with lying down and leaning against the walls also prohibited. Manning was deprived of all personal items in his cell, but equipped with a tear-proof security blanket that gave the prisoner rashes and carpet burns. There was also the unrelenting repetitive stress of having to respond every five waking minutes to the guards query, Are you okay? And if Manning slept at night he was not permitted to sleep during the day in such a position that his guards could not see him, he was awakened and repositioned. Eventually, Mannings reading glasses were confiscated; so was all of his clothing.

If this were done to a U.S. soldier held captive in North Korea or Iran, few American pundits would hesitate to call this torture. But for nine months this treatment was inflicted on Manning, and for nine months the Quantico brig's psychiatrists urgently insisted that there was no medical or psychiatric justification for this treatment. By April of 2011, political pressure, mainly from overseas, got Manning transferred to the medium-security prison population at Fort Leavenworth.

No feature of the Bradley Manning affair has been more vividly controversial than the young soldiers nine months in punitive isolation. The State Departments top spokesperson, an unflappable font of doubletalk, lost his job after a spontaneous eruption damning Mannings treatment. President Obama himself weighed in, soothingly informing a reporter that he had personally looked into the matter and that Mannings ongoing isolation and enforced nudity was for the young mans own good. (In fact, the prisons own psychiatric staff repeatedly found that there was no medical reason for Manning to be in isolation, and argued month after month that he be taken off Prevention of Injury status.)

Sustained isolation of the kind inflicted on Bradley Manning does a body harm. Not surprisingly, medical research into the effects of solitary confinement finds that the treatment inflicts lasting severe damage. Solitary confinement can have serious psychological, psychiatric and sometimes physiological effects on many prison inmates, writes Dr. Peter Scharff Smith. A long list of possible symptoms from insomnia and confusion to hallucinations and outright insanity has been documented. The suicide rate for isolated inmates, according to another psychiatric expert on mental health in prisons, is substantially higher than among those living communally in general populations.

In the footsteps of medical science, international law is ever less hesitant to classify solitary confinement as torture. The European Court of Human Rights has allowed the practice in the case of Kurdish terrorist Abdullah Oumlcalan, but after finding a marked mental deterioration in that prisoner the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture recommended that the Turkish government integrate him into a communal setting. The United States has ratified the international Convention Against Torture, whose acting body, the Committee Against Torture, has recommended that long-term solitary confinement be wholly abolished. The German Bundestags human rights committee was not breaking new ground when it condemned Mannings treatment as torture.

But what could possibly inspire the American government to torture one of its own citizens? Most of those who have answered this question have approached the problem from the context of Americas post-9/11 GWOT. Andy Worthington, the most dogged and incisive journalistic tracker of the Guantamo prison complex, has asked if Bradley Manning is being treated like an enemy combatant. Lisa Hajjar, a trenchant academic analyst of Washingtons weaponization of international law, has described the treatment of Manning as a slide down the slippery slope, from torturing enemy combatants to inflicting the same punishment on American citizens, just as torture opponents predicted would happen.

It is certainly tempting to see the isolation torture of Bradley Manning as toxic spillover from the Global War on Terror. After all, should we be surprised that the measures that our military and intelligence services take against foreigners are later applied against Americans?

What else could explain an advanced industrial democracy abusing one of its own citizens?

There is undoubtedly some truth to this story that after a decade, the excesses of the War on Terror have seeped into our domestic justice systems. Yet this account is, by itself, incomplete. In fact, this narrative is perhaps undeservedly reassuring. For this story assumes that our domestic criminal justice system was already uncontaminated, and had hitherto run smoothly and fairly, at least more or less. This narrative of corruption assumes that Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and Guantanamo are flagrant offenses against American values, vivid exceptions to our legal and penal norms. It assumes that nine months pretrial detention in isolation is simply unheard-of in the United States. In short, this story assumes the legalized torture of Bradley Manning to be exceptional, an atrocity. And all of these assumptions we have no choice but to reject, for they are wrong both in their particulars and in the overall image of America's justice system that they purvey.

The controversial isolation of Pfc. Manning has opened the eyes of many both to the horrors of solitary confinement, and to just how *uncontroversial* its pervasive use has become in the United States, for isolation is hardly some rare form of extreme punishment reserved for alleged national security threats like Pfc. Manning. In fact, the use of long-term solitary in the United States is frequent and widespread. Manning's isolation cell at Marine Corps Base Quantico was anything but an invasive tendril of Guantanamo reaching back into the U.S. mainland. Rather, Manning's cell was a blandly normal feature of the American landscape, just like baseball diamonds and strip malls.

[Read the rest here.](#)

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

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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@Anita precisely, there must be prison, consequences to actions, but we as Americans have rights to not be tortured and to be proven guilty not assumed guilty. I am ashamed of this country that I used to be proud of.

I also read the following article this morning.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/today-is-bradley-mannings-1-000th-day-without-a-trial/273430/#>

Today Is Bradley Manning's 1,000th Day Without a Trial

By D.B. GRADY

What the treatment of the WikiLeaks detainee says about our government's most damning secret

Robert Gates offered an honest appraisal of the situation to the press. There are few men alive today who know the secrets that Gates knows; he was Secretary of Defense then, during a time of war, and before that a Director of Central Intelligence. His opinion is therefore quite worthy of deep consideration. Gates pointedly questioned the alarmists in Washington at the time. He said:

Now, I've heard the impact of these releases on our foreign policy described as a meltdown, as a game-changer, and so on. I think I think those descriptions are fairly significantly overwrought. The fact is: governments deal with the United States because it's in their interest, not because they like us, not because they trust us, and not because they believe we can keep secrets.

Many governments some governments deal with us because they fear us, some because they respect us, most because they need us. We are still essentially, as has been said before, the indispensable nation. So other nations will continue to deal with us. They will continue to

work with us. We will continue to share sensitive information with one another. Is this embarrassing? Yes. Is it awkward? Yes. Consequences for U.S. foreign policy? I think fairly modest.

For all that Bradley Manning revealed, he didnt really reveal much.

But by its shameful non-application of justice in Mannings prosecution 1,000 days in chains for a nonviolent offense, without the dignity of a trial by jury the U.S. government has itself revealed the most terrible truth imaginable.

Well maybe not the most terrible truth but a close second.

If this small effeminate young man hits the General Population hell very likely add to the following sad statistics.

Prison Rape and the Government
MARCH 24, 2011
David Kaiser and Lovisa Stannow

More than 216,600 people were sexually abused in prisons and jails and, in the case of at least 17,100 of them, in juvenile detention. Overall, thats almost six hundred people a daytwenty-five an hour.

Overall, most victims were abused not by other inmates but by corrections staff: agents of our government, paid with our taxes, whose job it is to keep inmates safe.

All the numbers we have cited count people who were abused, not instances of abuse. People raped behind bars cannot escape their attackers, though. They must live in constant fear, their trauma renewed every time they see their assailants. Between half and two thirds of those who claim sexual abuse in adult facilities say it happened more than once; previous BJS studies suggest that victims endure an average of three to five attacks each per year.

Justice Justice of Texas wrote the following in an article published in the Texas Observer in 1999

Cruel and Unusual Still:

Texas prison inmates continue to live in fear a fear that is incomprehensible to most of the states free world citizens. More vulnerable inmates are raped, beaten, owned, and sold by more powerful ones. Despite their pleas to prison officials, they are often refused protection. Instead, they pay for protection, in money, services, or sex. Correctional officers continue to rely on the physical control of excessive force to enforce order. Those inmates locked away in administrative segregation, especially those with mental illnesses, are subjected to extreme deprivations and daily psychological harm. Such practices and conditions cannot stand in our society, under our Constitution.

Here is a quote from the Supreme Court?

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun, Farmer v. Brennan:

The horrors experienced by many young inmates, particularly those who are convicted of nonviolent offenses, border on the unimaginable. Prison rape not only threatens the lives of those who fall prey to their aggressors, but it is potentially devastating to the human spirit. Shame, depression, and a shattering loss of self-esteem accompany the perpetual terror the victim thereafter must endure.

I dont believe in coddling criminals and it is very likely that this man is guilty, but what is described here is torture and should not be tolerated in our society. What kinds of people are running our prisons and our legal institutions? If this report is true, it is alarming.

Just as the author of thearticle cites isolation is effecting thousands that go unnoticed. If his plight translate into change something good will come of it but until he does over 10,000 days I do not feel sorry for him. Too too many held much longer than he.

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