

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/02/10/inmate-dies-during-hunger-strike-at-californias-corcoran-state-prison/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | February 10, 2012

**Update (February 13):** Theresa Cisneros, Public Information Officer at Corcoran, confirmed to Solitary Watch that Christian Gomez, 27, was hunger striking at the time of his death in the Administrative Segregation Unit. Official autopsy results still pending. Nancy Kincaid of California Correctional Health Care Services told Solitary Watch that Gomez had been medically monitored for hunger strike activity and had been on strike for four days at the time of his death on February 2nd. She further said that the preliminary autopsy report does not indicate hunger strike activity contributed to his death. News of a death in Corcoran State Prisons Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) is emerging as an under-reported hunger strike in the prisons ASU comes to a close. People held in the ASU are held in 23-hour-a-day solitary confinement. Many have been in isolation for years and even decades. California State Prison, Corcoran, which houses over 1400 in Security Housing Units (SHUs) and an additional 350 in ASUs, has been the site of two waves of hunger strikes since late December 2011. Unlike the highly publicized [hunger strikes last year](#) that originated in Pelican Bay State Prisons SHU, the Corcoran strikes have remained relatively small and have received little press attention. On December 19, 2011, three people held at Corcoran [announced a hunger strike](#) protesting the conditions of the ASU. They listed eleven demands ranging from educational and rehabilitative programming to timely medical care. According to California Department of Corrections spokesperson Terry Thornton:

On Dec. 28, 59 inmates housed in the Administrative Segregation Unit at Corcoran State Prison refused their state-issued meals. On Dec. 29, that number dropped to 54. On Dec. 30, 49 inmates refused state-issued meals. By Dec. 31, all inmates resumed eating state-issued food.

According to Pyung Hwa Ryoo, one of the main petitioners of the December 2011 hunger strike:

Three days after the strike began, prison officials came to the ASU and let the strikers know that the petition, and demands of the strike, would be granted. They requested three weeks to make the changes happen; and to give them the benefit of the doubt, the request was granted and the strike was put on hold. It has been a little more than 2 weeks since the strike stopped. So far, there has been some improvements in this ASU, but the majority of the promised changes have not yet occurred.

According to a letter from strike petitioner Juan Jaimes dated January 31st:

this hunger strike commenced on December 28, 2011 and it has no ending date unless some or all demands are met

He also indicated (as confirmed by CDCRs prisoner locator) that he was transferred from Corcoran to Kern Valley State Prison. Though unconfirmed, he has also indicated that the two other strike petitioners were also transferred away from each other. There is conflicting information suggesting that some prisoners continued to strike during the period between the official strikes. The following, however, has been confirmed by Thornton:

On Jan. 27, 32 inmates in Corcoran State Prisons Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) refused to eat breakfast and started a hunger strike. As of Feb. 9, all prisoners in the ASU except one resumed eating state-issued food.

In an email to Solitary Watch from Nancy Kincaid, Director of Communications for California Correctional Health Care Services, stated that all strikers resumed eating February 9th. A letter to California activist Kendra Castaneda from a [Corcoran ASU striker](#), however, indicated that on or about Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 a prisoner has passed away due to not eating. While the cause of death and its possible relationship to the hunger strike remains unconfirmed, Thornton responded to questions from Solitary Watch with an apparent affirmation that a prisoner death had taken place, and the statement: I do not know the results of the autopsy. In response to a phone call, Tom Edmonds, Chief Deputy Coroner in Kings County confirmed that prisoner Christian Gomez died on February 2nd at Corcoran, but also did not share the cause of death. Solitary Watch will provide updates as information becomes available.

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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If my husband dies because of this stupid hunger strike i will sue the f out of you guys. You guys go on hunger strike see how you like it. you wouldnt even starve a dog. God didnt say to punish people by starving them. think about it.

yaya, what is ur family doing. do u have a lawyer. what can we do for ur lv one there @corcoran

my son is there, i want 2 know how he can be moved. from there

My brother was Christian Gomez and he had medical conditions ad therefore he needed medication and had to be more than just monitered. According to the Coroner there is a big chance that it was due to the chemical imbalance of the hunger strike. Therefore, the fact that these people are saying it wasnt due to the hunger strike is false. The cause has not been determined but everyting that went down could have casued it. The fact that he was probably not receiving the medical attention that his condition needed, the time that elapsed before he got assitance , and the conditions that he was facing in there could have all contributed to his death. It is sad that a HUMAN being has to die for these prisons to make a change. I do believe his rights were violated.

I am wondering if the CDCR knows what really happened? These cases are processed so sloppy the finger will eventually point downwards towards some of the officers that worked in that cellblock creating the perfect deflection or opportunity for the admin to wash its own hands eventhough they created the culture that causes deaths.

Unless the media, the clergy or other legitimate advocacy groups can reach these solitary prisoners without barriers [but with proper security guidelines in place] these type of incidents and facts will remain to be secret and undisclosed to the families, the public and the world. Solitary confinement must be eliminated for the mentally ill and better oversight should be kept to ensure the delivery of essential services e.g. medical, mental health, food, personal development and other crafts to give them something to do. Shorter terms with opportunities to reduce in custody reductions is also a meaningful tool to reduce SHU and AD Seg populations based on the agencys determination of threat to the security of the institution and other administrative concerns.

I feed. My dogs better then the jail feeds there inmate I know my daughter was In a jail and she should of been there. They didnt feed her well. Got rape on her birthday and next day dead. One of the co killed her you will get yours for killing. lmy baby girl. Do way with lock up. And feed the inmates better they are human God Seen you. You will answer. Too God its a Dunn deal God bless

P.O. Box 11374  
Washington, DC 20008

[info@solitarywatch.org](mailto:info@solitarywatch.org)

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