

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Campaign and Advocacy

close

Search

close

close

by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | July 24, 2013

Nearly one thousand California prisoners have been on hunger strike for two weeks. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) [released](#) updated hunger strike figures on Monday, July 24th, reporting 986 strikers at 11 prisons across the state. In addition, 42 others at an unnamed facility are continuing to engage in a work stoppage. All hunger strikers at this point, according to California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS) [policy](#), are to have received written information about advance directives and a Physician Order for Life Sustaining Treatment, and a document informing them You may die, even after you start to eat again, and that Now is the time for you to think about what medical care you want when you are no longer able to talk to health care staff.

Meanwhile, media [outlets](#) are reporting that CDCR has denied media access to the hunger strikers, a policy it followed during the hunger strikes of 2011. On Tuesday, [according](#) to the LA Times, CDCR officials met with outside advocates of the hunger strikers, though the meeting was purely informational and was not a negotiation, leaving advocates frustrated.

Solitary Watch has received a confirmation of a previous report that sandbags are being placed at the doors of hunger strikers at California Correctional Institution, Tehachapi. They have placed sandbags and milk crates with sandbags in front of cell doors, writes a family member of a hunger striker, those participating in hunger strike were placed on canteen restriction for next month. The Public Information Officer at California State Prison, Corcoran, also confirmed this practice at his institution. Pelican Bay State Prisons PIO has repeatedly refused to answer questions, telling Solitary Watch to refer to Terry Thornton. Folsom State Prisons PIO responds to emails from Solitary Watch with the terse Please contact OPEC at (916) 445-4950.

Spokespeople from the CCHCS in contrast have been more responsive to information requests. One spokesperson told Solitary Watch that, We have had two cases where inmates were seen by a medical facility off prison grounds for medical reasons both of those individuals were treated, discharged, and returned to their prison.

Another told Solitary Watch that forced feeding has not yet occurred. He outlined the reasons that forced feeding may occur:

Health care staff shall grant participants autonomy in health care decisions related to nutrition and shall not force feed the participant unless one of the following criteria is met:

Forced feeding (enteral or parenteral nutrition support) shall not take place except in a licensed health care facility by licensed clinical staff.

Family members and supporters of hunger strikers have sent Solitary Watch photos and information about their loved ones. The following are a few that Solitary Watch has received. (If you'd like to contribute, email the author at: sal.solitary@gmail.com)

Marco Topete, 41, San Quentin Adjustment Center Hunger Striker

My husband is a participant of the Prisoners Hunger strike . He is currently in the A/C of San Quentin Prison. He has been there since 2010. Previous to that he was in Pelican Bay Prison in the SHU. I married him in 2004. He had been in there a total of eight years. He was released in 2007. I would like to share his story along with his photo for not only the current situation but as being a witness what solitary confinement does to the human being. I have personally woke this man up from Night Terrors, from being in the SHU. He could not stand loud noises and large crowds would bother him at first .

He would have violent outburst as he was asleep if he heard anyone approach him . As I said he is now in San Quentin on death row. The reason he is there is because he killed someone. There was no transitional program to help him to be productive in society once released from the SHU into the world. He never got in trouble while in the SHU but because he was validated as a Northerner during a riot in the 1990s he was placed in the SHU for the duration of his incarceration unless he debriefed. I can tell you from personal experience that him being placed in the SHU for years, that his mental physical capabilities were definitely affected. Now he is sitting on Death Row I know he did wrong but if you cage anything or anyone for years and then set it/him/her free what do they expect?

Alfred Sandoval, Pelican Bay SHU Hunger Striker

Alfred Sandoval has been in the Pelican Bay SHU since 2001, and had previously been held in the San Quentin Adjustment Center for

fifteen years. While in the Adjustment Center, he was able to at least has sun exposure. In the windowless Pelican Bay, this is not the case. As a result, he has become significantly pale compared to how he was in 1997.

He wrote the [following](#) a few days before the July 1st, 2011 hunger strike:

Let me begin with a quote The degree of civilization may be judges by entering its prisons.

As a prisoner housed in the isolation control unit known as the Short Corridor of Pelican Bay State Prison, D-Facility SHU, I decided to write and expose and hopefully bring attention to the daily abuses being committed by administrators and correctional officers as part of a concerted effort lead by the Office of Correctional Security (OCS) to psychologically and physically break prisoners by any means.

In 2001 I was transferred to this gulag from San Quentins Death Row where I had spent approximately 15 years in the adjustment center. On the first day I arrived, I was told in no uncertain terms that I would die here one way or another and that I was a cancer to be cut out.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watchs 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

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Did you know young girls are being raped and kidnapped and their rapist are being charged with misdemeanors instead of sentences that fit the crimes. They let them Off and they get out and reoffend. What the hell our some of these district attorneys Thinking?

I pray that the correctional institutions realize, that the system is very broken. Society needs to take responsibility for its ignoring mental illness

In young offenders also the drug culture the new prison inmates are involved in since their youth. They have been desensitized by all the violence they grow up watching on TV, games, and single parent or drug addicted parents. This world needs to work at helping young inmates

Get mental health care while they are incarcerated. Help them to realize their wrongs they have committed some under the influence of drugs,

Or mental issues that were never addressed by our communities, schools, even their own families. Lack of support and education to help there kids who end up incarcerated. They need not just be housed but given a chance to rehabilitate. God doesnt relate murders. Society and people fail to help human beings who have been damages in many ways. I pray for all of us, we need to change this broken system. We U.S.A in prison more people in the whole world. I would say dont that isnt a good thing. Peace????

Yes we as citizens of this great nation need to show solidarity no matter what color we are, we all are born, die and bleed the same. We are all part of Humanity. I apologize if I offended anyone, that was not my intent. I am sure white men suffer under the same conditions other prisoners that are or have been in solitary confinement. Lets all fight this injustice that is taking place in our prison system. We all are brothers and sisters in the family of Humanity.

@Martha I agree that those two comments above are distressing but if you think whites get preferential treatment then you need to read some more of the Voices from Solitary stories. You can start with the latest Guero, then let me suggest Silverstens and move on to William Blake. You might also contrast the hate filled comments under the Silverstein and Blake stories to those of non-whites who committed the same offenses.

Finally I can tell you as a formerly incarcerated white man I received no privilege or slack from anyone in the joint. In fact I would say less. There were days set aside for Black Pride and Cinco de Mayo where racial unity was openly displayed throughout the institution. Never was a day set aside where whites would gather in mass.

To walk through such a gathering while white was not without some risk or stress.

The child molesters and other such sick bastards were no more tolerated by whites, or guards for that matter, than by any other group.

My comment above was sarcastic and meant for those two haters.

The inmates have decided to stop the race attacks so we should follow in their example.

If enough of these fuckers die, we may be able to close the budget gap in California. Two weeks of 1,000 guys not eating = 42,000 meals not served.

There sure are a lot of angry hurt people. I understand if one of your loved ones have been hurt or killed? That must be hell. I also believe hate destroys and unforgiving hearts will fester and destroy you from the inside out. There are child molesters, serial killers that have been released and killed again, oh the difference from Alfred Sandoval they were white. Why didn't they put John Wayne Gasey in the SHU, oh sorry they gave him a paint set. Tex Watts was given privileges but again the difference he is a white criminal.

<http://blog.sfgate.com/fiore/2013/07/24/cruel-and-unusual-blues/>

Play this tune Cruel and Unusual Blues.

You know the days of that subversive Johnny Cash playing concerts in California prisons are over, so he is replaced here by Governor Jerry Brown complaining about those annoying federal judges sticking their noses in CA prison business.

Somehow I don't think it will be as big of a hit as the original but it is good for a chuckle to brighten your dark spirits.

I agree with Terri. I don't give a fuck about a bunch of convicted murders and rapists. They are convicted criminals. They are the worst of the worst. They are animals who deserve all the punishment they're receiving and MORE. Fuck you Alfred Sandoval. Rot and Die in your misery.

Men and Women who risk everything, Wives, Husbands, Freedom, Their Children, the comfort of their home. They give us our freedom, our lives. Heroes. The Prisoners in solitary confinement have 3 meals a day, a roof, and safety for other prisoners. Privileges should not be given in my opinion. It's true, Mr. Sandoval you will die there. I'm sure it is hell on earth. Guards abuse you. Consequences Mr. Sandoval. Your decision to murder, tear families apart and, perhaps, this victim has children you caused enormous grief. Our military suffer horribly with PTSD. I'm sure they have night terrors, and you can bet, many service members, can't stand loud noises, panic disorders, isolation from the world. More than likely, you receive medical, dental, medicine when you are sick. Our tax dollars support your life, even if you can't stand it. Our taxes would be better spent on our homeless, Animal kill shelters, better medical care and education. There is a photo showing a room with pillows, blankets, probably toilet and sink. I understand this has to be a night mare. But yet, you caused families to deal with a lifetime of pain. What exactly do you want to bring awareness to? How it can break a person down, how inhumane it is? Physically break prisoners by any means. Perhaps, you don't think about someone's life you took was a physical break? Why should you be rewarded when the victim never had a chance?

There is always two sides to every story.

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