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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | April 13, 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 California judge [has ruled](#) that the states prisons violated the Constitution by using excess force against people with mental illness. State officials will now be required to make additional changes to use-of-force procedures and restrict the use of disciplinary segregation for this vulnerable population.

A bill drafted last summer in the wake of Californias SHU hunger strikes [has successfully passed](#) through the Public Safety Committee by a 4-2 vote. If it becomes law, AB 1652 will sharply limit the number of offenses that can qualify someone for isolation, create a five-year maximum for time spent in the SHU, and end the practice of gang validation. [In These Times](#) featured a Q&A with Tom Ammiano, the Assembly member who introduced the bill.

Seven guards at Taylorsville prison in North Carolina [have been let go](#) as a result of an ongoing investigation into the death of a man incarcerated there. Michael Anthony Kerr, who was being held in solitary confinement when he died, had struggled with mental illness.

The Treatment Advocacy Center has [released a report](#), The Treatment of Persons with Mental Illness in Prisons and Jails: A State Survey, including a detailed analysis of the use of solitary confinement.

According to immigrant justice activists, Tacoma detention center [has continued to retaliate](#) against detainees that participated in a recent hunger strike by placing them in isolation. Several prisoners at the SHU at Honolulu Federal Detention Center are allegedly also [on hunger strike](#).

In Colorado, a bill that would prohibit the placement of people with mental illness in solitary confinement has [received initial bipartisan support](#).

The Executive Director of the National Religious Campaign against Torture has written an open letter in [The Huffington Post](#) to Former Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr., urging him to do more to challenge the use of solitary confinement. Jackson spent less than a week in isolation after providing know-your-rights trainings to fellow prisoners.

An attorney for the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) [has warned](#) that there will be real consequences if the states Supreme Court does not overturn a previous ruling mandating a higher threshold of evidence for placing someone in solitary. Appellant Franklin Higgins spent about two years in administrative segregation after being indicted by a grand jury, but he was eventually acquitted.

A circuit court has [rejected an appeal](#) from Mark McAdams, currently in long-term administrative segregation in Wyoming, after finding that the conditions on his unit were not pleasant [but] not extreme, and thus did not constitute a breach of due process.

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

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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 [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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I'm happy to see that the state of California is taking measures to end the psychological torture of inmates via solitary confinement. Perhaps a more expedient means of addressing this issue is via executive orders mandating at least twenty-one hours of recreational time a week for all inmates, in a setting where they can interact with others. For those inmates with a history of assaulting correctional staff, I would suggest designing a facility that would address the aforementioned, but limit contact with staff.

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