

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | September 3, 2017

An 18-year-old Bronx resident claims in a new lawsuit that workers at a juvenile detention center have been using their teen jailbirds as sex slaves, reported the [New York Post](#). The young man, Franklin Maldonado, said female supervisor Natalie Medford would take him out of segregation and bring him to her office to engage in sexual acts.

ICE has requested permission to destroy records that document instances of sexual assault, solitary confinement and deaths of people in custody, according to the [ACLU](#). ICE proposed various timelines for the destruction of these records ranging from 20 years for sexual assault and death records to three years for reports about solitary confinement.

A scientific study has shown that people locked up in solitary confinement who watched videos with nature scenes, felt less stressed and weren't as violent as those who didn't, reported the outlet [Nature](#). The findings were published in the academic journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. Critics of the study argue that it could be used to justify the continued use of solitary confinement a practice that some consider too harsh, noted the *Nature* article.

Several news stories came out of Wisconsin. A 16-year-old was held in solitary [for more than seven days](#) in violation of a judge's order prohibiting the practice for that length of time; data was released documenting that guards at the state's youth prison had pepper sprayed [teens 103 times](#) in the first half of this year; and the head of that the state's youth prison, Wendy Peterson, announced that she would be [stepping down](#) from the job. Meanwhile, a state lawmaker [called for the state](#) to study alternatives to solitary confinement.

Some prison officials in Arkansas believe that the state needs more solitary cells, [reported a local outlet](#), although there are no imminent plans to build them. We need more ways to lock up troublemakers, said William Dubs Byers, a member of the Arkansas Board of Corrections.

Alleged jihad recruiter Ali Charaf Damache [pleaded not guilty](#) to terrorism charges at a federal court in Pennsylvania, after what had been a prolonged battle to extradite him to the US. As Courthouse News reported, in 2015 Justice Aileen Donnelly with the [Irish] High Court in Dublin sank the effort with a 333-page ruling that cited a likelihood that Damache would face solitary confinement and other cruel conditions in U.S. custody. The lack of meaningful judicial review creates a risk of arbitrariness in the detention of the person in solitary confinement and therefore confirms that the prolonged detention in solitary confinement amounts to a breach of constitutional rights, she wrote at the time. Damache was later arrested in Spain and extradited to the US from there.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. She's written for the New York Times, Wired, BuzzFeed News, Solitary Watch, and other outlets. Find her [@stahlidarity](#) and at [stahlidarity.com](#).

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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