

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 18, 2015

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National Religious Campaign Against Torture Applauds New York Solitary Confinement Settlement, Urges Lawmakers To Go Further

Faith communities call for an end to the torture of long term solitary confinement

WASHINGTON This week, the New York Civil Liberties Union and New York State announced a significant settlement in *Peoples vs. Fischer*, a settlement which will lead to significant reduction in and changes to the use of solitary confinement in New York prisons. Today, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture honored the courage of the plaintiffs in this case and applauded Governor Cuomo and the New York Department of Corrections for this important step forward. While communities of faith celebrate the advances promised in this settlement, NRCAT also reaffirmed its commitment today to passing the *Humane Alternatives to Long-term Solitary Confinement Act* (A. 4401/S.2659), legislation that will end the torture of prolonged isolation in New York State.

Following the announcement of this settlement, Rev. Ron Stief, executive director of NRCAT released this statement:

"The settlement in *Peoples vs. Fischer* provides much-needed changes to begin to rectify the unjust solitary confinement practices in New York State. Long-term solitary confinement condemned as torture by the Pope and the United Nations alike does profound harm to those who are incarcerated, their loved ones, and to corrections staff working in such toxic environments. As people of faith we cannot abide the callous disregard for the humanity of so many in our prisons and jails. This settlement is an important recognition of our nation's moral duty to move from a punishment system to one that prioritizes restoration, rehabilitation and recovery.

We are mindful that full relief for the four thousand people who remain in solitary confinement in New York state prisons is not yet attained. Our interfaith membership stands united in calling on New York legislators to pass the *Humane Alternatives to Long Term Solitary Confinement Act*, landmark legislation which would end long term solitary confinement beyond 15 days in New York state. This week's settlement paves the way for the critical changes this legislation will bring about, but we cannot afford to delay any longer."

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 300 religious organizations have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

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