

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/1240-faith-leaders-applaud-state-senates-passage-of-groundbreaking-halt-solitary-confinement-act>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 18, 2021

CONTACT: Ben Roussel, 202-210-3112, ben@rousselpr.com

National Religious Campaign Against Torture, faith leaders applaud NY State Senates passage of groundbreaking HALT Solitary Confinement Act

S2836 would end the torture of solitary confinement in New York

WASHINGTON Today the New York State Senate passed S2836, also known as the Humane Alternatives To Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, in a 42-21 vote. This following Tuesdays 101-49 passage by the State Assembly. The bill goes next to Gov. Andrew Cuomo for his signature. If enacted into law, New York will join New Jersey as one of only two states with comprehensive legislation limiting the use of solitary confinement for all incarcerated people through the action of a state legislature.

The HALT Act limits the use of solitary confinement in New York prisons to 15 consecutive days and to 20 days within any 60 day period. Also, it mandates alternatives to solitary that provide therapy, treatment and rehabilitative programming in Residential Rehabilitation Units.

Fifteen consecutive days can cause permanent psychological harm yet is shockingly common in the United States. Nearly 15 percent of people held in solitary confinement have been held in extreme isolation for more than one year, and nearly 30% have been in solitary confinement for one to three months.

Today a supermajority of the New York State Senate voted to end the torture of solitary confinement in all NYS prisons and county jails. The victory restores the hope and humanity of incarcerated people and brings us a step closer to a system that reflects our values of true accountability without exacerbating harm while incarcerated.

As a survivor of solitary confinement and now a national organizer on prison conditions, I applaud the directly impacted leaders of the HALT Solitary Campaign who have spent years channeling the trauma they experienced into making sure others do not have to experience the same. I stand firmly in gratitude for their leadership which has brought forth the most progressive legislation in the United States limiting solitary confinement, and I look forward to seeing other states follow New York's lead. **Johnny Perez, Director of U.S. Prisons Program, National Religious Campaign Against Torture, Former Communications Chair of the New York #HALTsolitary Campaign**

In response to this important step for human rights, the National Religious Campaign against Torture and faith leaders issued the following statements:

"The torture of solitary confinement is a highly racialized punishment system that does immeasurable harm to predominantly black, brown and native people. Passage of the HALT Act is an important step forward for New York to recognize that racial justice should extend to everyone, including those who are in our prisons and jails." **Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director, National Religious Campaign on Torture**

T'ruah commends the New York state legislature for passing HALT Solitary Confinement Act. Through efforts by T'ruah members in New York, among other advocates, we are pleased to see New York's elected officials demonstrating their commitment to ending torture in the state. Jewish tradition is crystal clear about our obligation to everyone in our society, regardless of their status in the legal system. We applaud the legislature for taking this long-awaited, life-saving step for so many incarcerated New Yorkers. **Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Executive Director, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights**

An individual is more than their worst act. As a person of faith, I believe this. Finally, after 8 years of advocacy by those individuals directly impacted by solitary confinement and their allies, New York State legislators have heard the cry that solitary confinement is torture, and it must end! **Claire Deroche, member of NRCAT and the NYS HALT Solitary Campaign**

I applaud both the NYS Assembly and the Senate for passing the HALT Act. It is the moral and humane thing to do. As a person of Muslim faith, we are taught that all human life is sacred, to be just and fair in our judgement, and to treat others with kindness. I believe that by their actions this speaks to the God consciousness that resides in human kind. As a healing survivor of solitary confinement myself, passage of the HALT Act is a great accomplishment for all those who have contributed to the successes of the campaign. I look forward to the Governor signing this bill as soon as possible. In the Holy Quran it states, So verily with every difficulty there is relief,

verily with every difficulty there is relief (Surah 94: 5-6). **Victor Pate, NY Statewide Organizer, #HALTsolitary Campaign**

The passage of the HALT Act is an historic legislative victory for every person who is suffering the inhumane and immoral torture of solitary confinement. New Yorkers have proven once again the universal truth that with faith and persistence, all things are possible." **David Wildman, Main Representative to the UN, Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church**

To set up an interview with any of these advocates, please contact Ben Roussel at 202-210-3112 or via email ben@rousselpr.com

###

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) mobilizes people of faith to end torture in U.S. policy, practice, and culture. A nationally recognized interfaith membership organization based in Washington, DC, NRCAT is comprised of more than 300 religious organizations and more than 75,000 individuals have participated in our programs and activities. Our diverse partners share a common commitment to advancing the values of human dignity, human rights and an end to torture, without exception. To achieve its mission, NRCAT engages in grassroots organizing, public education, and state and national policy advocacy.

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

PO Box 91820

Washington, DC 20090

(t) 202.547.1920

(f) 202.547.1921