

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Lizzie Kane](#) | June 28, 2021

At least 15 men at SCI Phoenix, a Pennsylvania state prison near Philadelphia, have been on hunger strike since June 23 to protest conditions in the prisons Intensive Management Unit, or IMU. The IMU was billed as a transitional rehabilitation unit for individuals on the Restricted Release List (RRL), many of whom have been held in solitary confinement for years or even decades. But according to advocates with the [Human Rights Campaign](#) who are in touch with the hunger strikers, IMU residents say they are allowed out of their cells for just five hours a week. They are demanding yard time, educational and vocational programming, and a clear pathway to transition out of solitary confinement, out of the IMU, and off of the Restricted Release List.

After a years-long effort by advocates and some state lawmakers, a bill sharply limiting the use of solitary confinement in Connecticut has passed both houses of the state legislature and [awaits Governor Ned Lamont's signature](#). Survivors of solitary, family members, and others are pressing the governor to support the bill; this included dozens of faculty at Yale University, who sent a letter to the governor urging him to sign, [according to the New Haven Register](#).

[According to Fox News](#), the family of Jamel Floyd a man who died last May while incarcerated at the Metropolitan Detention Center, a federal jail in Brooklyn has filed a federal lawsuit, claiming that guards used excessive force against Floyd and then did nothing as he died. The lawsuit further states that Floyd was in solitary confinement after guards beat him up and he began to experience a severe mental health or medical crisis and repeatedly asked for medical help.

[The Florida Phoenix reported](#) that Florida school districts will soon be prohibited from using seclusion and isolation techniques on students. Governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation that will go into effect on July 1. Thousands of students have been subjected to isolation, particularly students with disabilities.

[A new report by the ACLU and Physicians for Human Rights](#) provides details of what happens to individuals in ICE facilities who participate in hunger strikes. As summarized in an [article in the Arizona Republic](#), detained immigrants who went on hunger strike to protest their conditions were often force-fed, and were subjected to forced hydration, forced urinary catheterization and other involuntary and invasive medical procedures, placed in solitary confinement and experienced retaliatory deportations and transfers. Eunice Cho, a co-author of the report and senior attorney at the ACLU's National Prison Project, told the Republic: Given the fact that hunger strikes are a First Amendment protected activity this speech is protected by the Constitution and to see the level of retaliation and truly brutal medical procedures that are being used against people against their will is truly shocking.

The Department of Homeland Security received complaints from various civil rights groups and other advocates over two Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities in Louisiana Pine Prairie Immigration and Customs Enforcement Processing Facility and Winn Correctional Center. [According to the Lens](#), in the Pine Prairie facility, it was reported that solitary confinement has been used to isolate incarcerated immigrants in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. In the Winn Correctional Center, a detainee [shared with NBC News](#) that there was no hot water, little food, a lack of toilets, and extremely cold temperatures. He said a protest broke out over the conditions, and I begged them to take me out of the room because I couldn't breathe with my asthma. One man fainted in front of me. But they left me there. Attorneys cite that individuals are being put in solitary confinement, including gay men who are put there for their protection after being harassed or assaulted by other detained people.

Lizzie Kane was an intern for Solitary Watch in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021. Her work has also appeared in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Dallas Morning News, and Charlotte Observer.

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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