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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Lisa Dawson](#) | May 12, 2013



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.

Media coverage on the urgency of closing Guantanamo was heavy throughout the past week, with an estimated 100 of the 166 detainees hunger striking. Most recently, *Al Jazeera* [publishes](#) a Guantanamo prison military document exposing the brutality of the force-feeding. According to the story, detainees undergo a brutal and dehumanising medical procedure that requires them to wear masks over their mouths while they sit shackled in a restraint chair for as long as two hours

The New York Times [reports](#) that New York City is planning to change the way it disciplines incarcerated people with mental illness, creating alternatives to the use of solitary confinement. [T]he city Correction Department will transfer severely mentally ill inmates to an internal clinic where psychiatrists will administer treatment and medicine, and the less seriously mentally ill will go to counseling programs designed to help them change their future behavior.

The *Los Angeles Times* publishes an [editorial](#) on the harm inflicted on kids who are subjected to isolation, stating [s]olitary confinement is ultimately a mental health issue for anyone who goes through it, and the practice, if it is to continue, should at the very least be documented for public review and monitored by mental health professionals.

The Seattle Times [reports](#) on a new program at Washington State Penitentiary seeking to ease violence in some of the most dangerous units inside the prison, minimizing the likelihood of reoffending. Rival gang members Norteos and Sureos, Bloods and Crips, white supremacists all brought together to discuss ways to stay out of trouble, both in prison and when they get out.

Angola 3 News [reports](#) on a [federal lawsuit](#) filed by Russell Maroon Shoatz's lawyers protesting his 22 consecutive years in solitary confinement. The story also features a recent interview with activist Bret Grote and Shoatz lawyer, Dan Kovalik, taking a closer look at the lawsuit and confronting human rights abuses in U.S. prisons.

Momentum builds to end the solitary confinement of youth, with *The Nation* calling for support in urging U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to ban the use of solitary confinement on youth. The [post](#) links to an [open letter](#) in support of a call by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and the ACLU imploring [Holder] to ban the practice of holding young people in federal custody in solitary confinement.

The Republic [reports](#) on a federal lawsuit alleging that correctional officers at North Carolina's Central Prison brutally beat prisoners held at the facility, using blind spots to avoid being seen by security cameras. An amended complaint filed last week in U.S. District Court by lawyers at North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services says the beatings occurred in Unit One, a cell block known as The Hole where inmates are kept in solitary confinement for disciplinary reasons.

NDTV [reports](#) on the solitary confinement of Boston marathon bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev at a high-security housing unit at a federal medical detention center in Massachusetts. The only time Tsarnaev gets out of his tiny cell, that contains a sink, toilet, shower

and a bed bolted to the floor, is for an hour of recreation every day.

The Colorado Independent [reports](#) that Colorado's El Pueblo Boys and Girls Ranch held Kiondre Davison, a 14-year old with an array of developmental disabilities, in solitary confinement for 25 days. Of particular concern is imposing isolation on developmentally delayed kids. Kiondre is typical of such cases. He struggled to understand what was happening to him and so only loosely tied his actions at El Pueblo to the consequences they brought.

Alan Prendergast [reports](#) that the legal team of Troy Anderson, who is currently incarcerated at Colorado's supermax prison, has filed court papers contending that Department of Corrections officials have failed to comply with a previous ruling by a federal judge that Anderson is entitled to three hours a week of outdoor activity. Anderson's attorneys assert that their client is worse off than before, with less effective mental health treatment, following a transfer from the supermax to solitary confinement at the Sterling Correctional Facility.

In an [op-ed](#) published on *Times Union*, Donn Rowe, President of New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, responds to a recent [story](#) on the harm inflicted on mentally ill people who are subjected to solitary confinement. According to Rowe, Special Housing Units are for inmates who are a danger to others and themselves.

SFGate [reports](#) that Colorado has banned a youth treatment center in El Pueblo from placing teens in solitary confinement. The state found three violations of Colorado regulations in its investigation, which followed complaints by the ACLU that the program was violating the constitutional rights of youth.

Black Agenda Report [reports](#) that people held in isolation at California's Pelican Bay may once again go on hunger strike, stating that more than 200 inmates at the [facility] have been in solitary confinement for between five and ten years and nearly 100 have been shut off from most human contact for 20 years or more. The story also calls for outside support, emphasizing the importance of having support networks in place beforehand.

New York City Council member Daniel Dromm denounces solitary confinement as cruel and unusual in a recent [editorial](#), stating [a]s a matter of fundamental human rights, how the DOC uses solitary confinement must radically change.

The Boston Globe [reports](#) that the use of segregation units has come under increased scrutiny in Massachusetts, where approximately 500 of the state's 11,000 prisoners are held in isolation on any given day. According to the story, Prisoner-rights advocates, legislators, and even corrections commissioners in other states are increasingly denouncing the use of solitary confinement, while others defend the practice as an essential part of prison management.

Lisa Dawson served as an assistant editor, social media manager, and contributor at Solitary Watch. She continues to support prisoners and their family members who need help navigating re-entry. She is on Twitter [@endsolitary](#).

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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P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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