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close

Search

close

close

Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#) | July 14, 2021

A hunger strike by more than 20 incarcerated men in Pennsylvania prisons over prolonged solitary confinement came to an end after ten days on July 6, reports the [Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#). The strikers are held in the Intensive Management Unit (IMU) at State Correctional Institution-Phoenix, which they allege is de facto solitary confinement. They declared victory after the Department of Corrections acknowledged the existence of IMUsomething their supporters said had never been done beforeas well as offering a pathway out of solitary confinement for some, and increased showers and phone access for all.

A British High Court has decided to hear the U.S. governments appeal concerning the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange after the U.S. made [assurances](#) that Assange would not be held under the extreme restrictions known as [Special Administrative Measures](#) (SAMs) or sent to ADX Florence, the [federal supermax](#) in Colorado, [reports the New York Times](#). The U.S. also guaranteed Assanges transfer to Australia to serve out any prison sentence. A lower court had [denied the US extradition request](#) after finding that there was a real risk that Assange would be held under SAMs and at ADX, creating a substantial risk of suicide. This is not the first time British courts have [considered the conditions in U.S. supermax prisons](#). In 2012, this question went all the way up to the [European Court of Human Rights](#), which ruled that Britain could legally extradite to the U.S. five men accused in terrorism cases, including one who [had never set foot](#) in the United States.

The [Kokomo Tribune reports](#) on lawsuits filed by six men held at Miami Correctional Facility in Indiana who allege they were held in isolation in total darkness for months. The men, who are represented by the ACLU of Indiana, allege they were locked in isolation cells inside the restrictive housing unit, that a broken window was covered with sheet metal, blocking light from outside while allowing in extreme cold, and that prison staff failed to replace lights inside the cell, leading to injuries from dangling live wires inside the cells and broken glass. One man says he was injured in March when a 100-pound light fixture fell, hitting him on the head.

[An article in the Boston Globe](#) looks at responses to the recent announcement by the Massachusetts Department of Corrections that it will move to end the use of solitary confinement. Judith Resnick of the Arthur Liman Center for Public Interest Law at Yale, which studies the use of solitary confinement nationwide, sounded a note of caution. [T]he concern isand weve seen this in other jurisdictionsthat they say we dont have restrictive housing, [and] instead there are people who are locked down for 21 and a half hours a day [rather than 22, which is defined as solitary], she said. Advocates and state lawmakers also pointed to the states failure to implement other recently-enacted reforms to solitary confinement. Michael Cox, the director of Black and Pink MA, a queer-focused abolitionist organization, who was placed in solitary confinement when he was incarcerated, said he had serious concerns about whether the state would follow through on its promises.

In an [op-ed for the New York Daily News](#), Anisah Sabur calls on New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson to make good on his past statements calling for an end to solitary in New York City jails. A recent city plan that Mayor Bill de Blasio claims ends solitary, instead simply amounts to solitary by another name, she writes. Johnson, whose terms ends next year, has previously called for a complete end to the use of solitary. [N]ow that it is clear the mayor and board will perpetuate solitary, writes Sabur, it is time for Johnson and the City Council to step in to enact legislation to truly end solitary confinement once and for all.

Albany County, New York, is preparing to pay in its second set of settlements in two years over the beating and abuse by county jail employees of young men transferred there from Rikers Island in 2018, [reports the Albany Times-Union](#). Lawyers for the plaintiffs believe they were transferred to [get around restrictions](#) on the placement of young people under the age of 22 in solitary confinement at Rikers Island. Upon arrival at the Albany County jail, they alleged that they were transferred into isolation and beaten by guards. The latest round of settlements will amount to more than \$1 million.

Vaidya Gullapalli is a staff writer and editor with Solitary Watch. She is a lawyer and former public defender, and was previously a writer at The Appeal. She is on Twitter [@vgullap](#).

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by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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the U.S. made assurances that Assange would not be held under the extreme restrictions known as Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) or sent to ADX Florence, the federal supermax in Colorado, reports the New York Times. The U.S. also guaranteed Assanges transfer to Australia to serve out any prison sentence.

This isn't accurate; assurances were given with caveats which essentially come down to unless we change our minds, or the CIA says Assange should be held under SAMs in ADX Florence. Further, Assange is in any case eligible to apply for transfer to Australia to serve out any prison sentence, but that would not happen until after all US court processes were ended which could take 10 more years.

In any case, US assurances about not keeping people under SAMs have been broken in the past; consider Abu Hamza, who was put under SAMs for a year after telling his grandson he loved him. Even without SAMs, some 80,000 prisoners in the US are currently held under administrative segregation, which is solitary confinement.

The Assange case has been a sequence of legal irregularities, the latest discovered being that the FBI provided immunity to an Icelandic criminal in exchange for testimony against Assange: that criminal has just published an interview admitting that his testimony was false.

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