

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Garrett Zehr](#) | August 30, 2015

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.

A 68-year-old woman from North Carolina was arrested and [put in solitary as punishment](#) for having walked away from a halfway house almost 40 years ago because of a family emergency, with just two months left in her sentence. Prison officials said the age of the individual or severity of the crime are not normally factors in meting out the punishment of 45 days in solitary for individuals who have escaped from an institution.

NPR concluded its three-report series on solitary with a look at the [push for reform](#) of the practice in New York. The second part of the series explored [positive changes in New Mexico](#) that saw the rate of use of solitary fall from 10 per cent of the prison population to 6 per cent in the past two years.

Wikileaks hacktivist [Jeremy Hammond has been held in solitary confinement](#) for more than six weeks at the Federal Correction Institution in Manchester, Kentucky. Hammond was told he was put in solitary pending an investigation by internal prison police, but has not been told what he is being investigated for or how long he will be forced to remain in solitary.

HBO and VICE have [released the trailer](#) for *Fixing the System*, a documentary about President Obamas historical visit to a federal prison in July. The visit came just days after Obama announced a [review of the overuse of solitary confinement](#) across the country. The documentary will air September 27.

A Delaware judge is [deciding whether to continue to hold](#) a man in solitary despite the fact that his conviction and death sentence were overturned in January. Isaiah McCoy has been in solitary for six years and is simply requesting a return to general population pending the retrial. The new trial was ordered because of errors by the judge and prosecutor, so egregious that the prosecutor was suspended for professional misconduct in the case.

Virginia is [relaxing restrictions for individuals on death row](#) in response to a lawsuit of the almost constant conditions of solitary that individuals are held in. The eight people on death row are being allowed weekly contact visits with family and more opportunities for showers and recreation.

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that an individual held in Wende Correctional Facility near Buffalo has a [cause of action for cruel and unusual punishment](#) for being held in an unventilated cell with a non-working toilet for at least seven days. The claim alleges he was subject to three periods of solitary in cells reeking of excrement and was at one point left in a cell naked for two weeks.

In California, supporters continue to rally for the passage of SB 124, which [would ban the use of solitary confinement of youth](#) for more than four hours and prohibit its use as a form of punishment.

US Attorney General Loretta Lynch has [ordered a lockdown](#) of accused al-Qaeda supporter Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh, claiming there is a high probability he may try to order a terrorist attack from the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York. Al Farekhs lawyer called the treatment barbaric and cited United Nations policy that says long-term indefinite solitary confinement is considered torture.

An immigrant rights group in Arizona claims that an individual was put in month-long solitary for [speaking to the media about conditions](#) at the privately-run detention centre. The mans wife also says he was targeted for trying to organize a strike.

A man is [suing the state of New Hampshire](#) for placing him in the prisons Special Handling Unit for violating prison rules by failing to shave his thick beard. Prison officials claim the beard could be used to hide weapons or drugs but the man says it is a necessary part of his Taoist beliefs.

A Chicago group of LGBTQ prison abolitionists has started [a project to gather and publish the experiences](#) of individuals in solitary

confinement. The group notes that LGBTQ individuals are often put in solitary under the auspices of their own protection, in addition to administrative and disciplinary reasons that all individuals face.

Democracy Now! featured an [interview with Sarah Shourd](#), a Solitary Watch Contributing Editor who spent over a year in solitary confinement in an Iranian prison, about her new play *Opening the Box*, which is based on the experiences of people in solitary.

Garrett Zehr is a Toronto-based legal aid lawyer practicing criminal defense and international human rights law, and a proud union member.

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 [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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