

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/12/09/activists-urge-u-s-government-grant-un-torture-expert-access-new-yorks-prisons/>

Campaign and Advocacy

close

Search

close

close

by [Marlies Talay](#) | December 9, 2013

In preparation for Human Rights Day tomorrow, groups opposing solitary confinement have [sent letters](#) to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, urging them to grant the request of the UN's main torture expert for more information on and access to New York's prisons.

Juan Mndez, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, has repeatedly asked the United States State Department to visit American prisons, specifically in California, Colorado, and Pennsylvania as well as New York, stating that his main concern is the use of solitary confinement.

Mndez has long condemned the use of prolonged solitary confinement in prisons and jails as torture. In a report to the General Assembly of the UN in August 2011, Mndez called this practice inhumane punishment, and concluded that 15 continuous days in solitary must be the limit before harmful physical and psychological effects take place. The United States has kept incarcerated people in isolation for far longer; some have been in continuous solitary confinement for years or even decades.

Mndez said specifically that he needs to be able to speak to those currently held in solitary confinement during the visits in order to understand who is put into isolation and why, as well as the conditions of punitive segregation. Mndez has emphasized that while no one should be held in isolation for a prolonged period of time, certain vulnerable categories of incarcerated people should never be put into solitary, including pregnant women, people with mental illness, and children.

In his [report](#) to the UN General Assembly in August 2013, Mndez specifically condemned the degrading conditions of detention in New York state prisons. He further stated that under New York's State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), incarcerated people could be in extreme isolation for an indefinite amount of time, because New York State does not place maximum limits on sentences of isolated confinement.

Prior to this report, Mndez had [written to the United States government](#), urging it to investigate and prevent mistreatment of those incarcerated in solitary confinement, highlighting three specific cases of prolonged isolation. Mndez appealed to the State Department on the behalf of these three men: William Blake, Stephen Poole, and Kenneth Wright, citing their difficulty in obtaining adequate medical attention as well as the severe mental and physical health risks involved in keeping people in solitary confinement indefinitely.

Mndez alleged both in his letter and the report to the General Assembly that these practices in New York prisons constituted torture, citing evidence that many people are held in isolation for years without an end date, and that many end up with solitary confinement sentences for committing nonviolent offenses.

In its letter to John Kerry last week, the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) urged the secretary of State to provide the information requested by Mndez immediately. A letter to Andrew Cuomo urged the governor to facilitate the release of information, and of Mndez's ability to enter New York's solitary confinement units to conduct fact-finding.

With Human Rights Day approaching, both letters conclude, we join in calling on you to take these steps to honor the humanity and dignity of New Yorkers suffering the torture of solitary confinement.

CAIC, which brings together human rights, civil liberties, and religious organizations with formerly incarcerated people and family members of those in solitary confinement, will join the New York City Jails Action Coalition and American Friends Service Committee to host a [vigil](#) in Lower Manhattan's Foley Square tomorrow at 4 PM to protest the routine use of extreme and prolonged isolation in New York's state prisons and city jails.

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please visit the the Massachusetts Department of Corrections at the Supermax Souza Baranowski Correctional Center in Shirley, MA. The Department Disciplinary Unit (DDU) where there are Latino no-violent mentally ill/substance abuse prisoners being forced held for long-term in Solitary Confinement!

I ask for Justice

Is there any difference between NY and other states in United Prisoner Breeding Nation? What sort of New World are we living in? Consider the roots, and the spiritual/churchly leaders contribution since. Oppression in dictatorial surrounding for correction in World Leading Jailer Land: There is no crueller tyranny than that which is exercised under cover of law, and with the colors of justice U.S. v. Jannotti, 673 F.2d 578, 614 (3d Cir. 1982)

If Jesus came back, theyd throw him in the SHU too.

I seriously doubt that as I think they (the government(s)) would carry him off as soon as they found out the person being Jesus, and then interrogate him (with as result that he be dead after the interrogation), and then ending up on the bottom of the deepest part of the most deep ocean possible in a concrete box..

Why? Keeping Jesus in a SHU would mean that he possibly(!) could make contact with anyone on the outside, and then reveal that hes Jesus, forcing them (as above) to make statements on and about him, of course making mistakes and then having to explain, all become excited and the incarcerated person (ie Jesus) would be freed, and in the open, and they (as above) would be exposed as foul, rotten, corrupt to the core. were we already know they (as above) are all that but we leave it at that too.

In other words, if Jesus were to come back (has he been gone then..?) it would make no difference.. they (as above) are known to be foul, rotten, and corrupt to the core

Please visit the Polunsky Unit in Texas too, the men on Death Row are I total isolation, its barbaric.

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

Copyright 2022, Solitary Watch

Read about [rights and permissions](#).



Solitary Watch News