

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/09/04/day-58-california-prison-hunger-strike/>

## Campaign and Advocacy

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | September 4, 2013

Starvation affects every part of your body and will make you weak and vulnerable to infections. The function of all your cells and organs will decline. Your skin may become fragile and you are likely to develop uncomfortable sores, particularly in the mouth and bony pressure points. You may feel very cold and experience constipation and/or diarrhea. Lack of food is likely to affect your ability to think clearly. You may become depressed or withdrawn. Eventually, starvation will start to damage your major organs which can then fail completely. Heart failure and sudden disturbance of the heart beat are the leading cause of death in starvation. Your choice to refuse food can result in death.

If you are well nourished when you began to refuse food and you take in adequate fluid, you are unlikely to die from starvation for at least six to eight weeks.

So reads a Pelican Bay State Prison Hunger Strike Informational Sheet revised in June 2013 and distributed to California hunger strike participants protesting long-term segregation in cells the size of a bathroom, for average terms of 6.8 years, with limited opportunities to demonstrate a willingness and potential to reintegrate in the prison general population and by extension, society. The hunger strike is now eight weeks in, with 40 on hunger strike all 58 days as of yesterday. An additional 88 hunger strikers are still on hunger strike.

Hunger strikers are known to be at Pelican Bay State Prison, where the four hunger strike leaders remain in the Administrative Segregation Unit, isolated from others even further. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation chief, Jeffrey Beard, a former psychologist, has publicly denounced the strike as merely a [gang power play](#) and an effort by violent prison gangs to stay in business. How demands for better food, more constructive programming, and behavior-based segregation practices would strengthen prison gangs and undermine institutional security has yet to be explained.

Notably, California State Senator Loni Hancock and Assemblyman Tom Ammiano have [announced](#) their intentions to hold hearings on the SHU. Assemblyman Ammiano has previously held two hearings on the SHU in [2011](#) and earlier [this year](#).

Hunger striker Mutope Duguma, who has been in the Pelican Bay SHU for over a decade for alleged affiliation with the Black Guerilla Family (BGF), has [reported](#) that on August 23rd, two busloads of hunger strikers at Pelican Bay were transported to California State Prison, Sacramento (New Folsom), on an eight hour bus ride that was a harrowing experience for the weakened hunger strikers. Solitary Watch has also received reports of hunger strikers at California State Prison, Corcoran also being sent to New Folsom in the past two weeks.

The wife of one hunger striker from Pelican Bay who was transported to New Folsom who recently visited him reported to Solitary Watch that her husband was very skinny. She also reported the following information from her husband: On the buses, they had no medical personnel, though the men were being told they were being transferred due to medical reasons or medical monitoring. Their visits have not been taken away and per Assistant Warden Baufman, they will not be taken away. My husband has now lost 58 lbs and was told that before he is sent back to Pelican Bay, he must gain back a certain percentage of his body weight..he has lost [at least] 27% of his body weight. As of right now, he and the other men have no plans to resume eating until negotiations between hunger strikers and CDCR are met. My understanding is these men could end up being at New Folsom for several months. My husband said everyone is doing fine and their spirits are high, though their bodies are weak.

The medical receivers office has told Solitary Watch that not all hunger strikers are consenting to being weighed, though of those who have, two hunger strikers have lost more than 15% of their body weight; 12 have lost more than 10% of their body weight.

Also according to the medical receivers office, there are three prisons with hunger strikers. It is unclear what the third prison is, alongside Pelican Bay and New Folsom. On August 28th, there were three prisons on hunger strike; on the 29th, there were also three prisons on hunger strike, though the medical receivers office reported that these were not the same three as on the 28th. In other words, one prison ended its participation while another joined. Determining which prisons are involved has been a challenge.

On August 27th, the CDCR press office told Solitary Watch that the hunger strike at Corcoran had ended and that there were no negotiations. The hunger strikers chose to resume eating. However, Solitary Watch later received word from a hunger strike mediator

that some black inmates were resuming their hunger strike, a claim that hasn't been reflected in CDCR's official hunger strike counts.

On the issue of hunger strike counts, the unnamed mediator also reported to Solitary Watch several examples of improper hunger strike counts they had received:

There is also the possibility that Calipatria State Prison resumed hunger strike activity last week, as they reportedly said they would do if the hunger strike leaders weren't negotiated with, which clearly has not happened. Either way, there is no clear evidence of what the third prison on hunger strike is.

The hunger strike participation levels reported by CDCR have varied widely over the past week and a half:

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

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

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#### ONLY GOD CAN CHANGE SOMETHING

How demands for better food, more constructive programming, and behavior-based segregation practices would strengthen prison gangs and undermine institutional security has yet to be explained.

Well then let me explain it to you. If they are successful in their attempt to strong arm the state to their demands, they will gain more credit with the general population and therefore more followers that they can then use to further force the state's hand.

This is stupid! Let them all kill themselves. Less people my tax dollars have to pay for. Do the crime do the time, don't like the surroundings don't do illegal acts and you can choose your surroundings.

Thus is sad. Why the secrets? How come it's not on national/world news this is big news.

CA the barbarian state in a nation of torture.  
Good luck to the hunger strike survivors.

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