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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | May 18, 2015

The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past two weeks that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

Curry County, New Mexico has [again been sued](#) on allegations of abuse at its jail facilities. Alejandro Alex Romero, 36, did not receive any medication for his diagnosed schizophrenia during a 2012 incarceration on misdemeanor charges; according to his lawyer, in the six months Alex was held in solitary confinement, his mental health deteriorated to the point that he smeared his own feces all over his cell.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois [announced](#) that its federal lawsuit against the state for its treatment of juvenile offenders has been settled. Under the new policy, children will be required to spend at least eight hours each day out of their cells, and those in isolation will continue to receive education and mental health services.

The UK's [Independent](#) published an article about the recent guilty plea of Mahdi Hashi, who in 2012 was stripped of his British citizenship and flown to the United States on terrorism charges. [Hashi's] supporters say that such harsh treatment and all those years in solitary confinement left him little choice but to end his ordeal by pleading guilty.

Human Rights Watch released a report, entitled [Callous and Cruel](#), that examines the treatment of people with mental illness inside Americas prisons. According to the investigation, compared to other prisoners, [people with mental illness] are disproportionately at risk of being confined in solitary, and more likely to deteriorate once moved from general population. (Covered by [The Daily Beast](#) and others.)

[Times](#) Jeffrey Kluger published an article exploring how a civilized society should punish its monsters, specifically looking at the use of solitary confinement. He writes, We can punish them and pen them without forfeiting an important part of ourselves as well.

The Vera Institute of Justice published a [report](#) that examines common misconceptions about solitary confinement as well as emerging alternatives. (Covered by [The Huffington Post](#) and others.)

Nicoll Hernandez-Polanco, a 24-year-old Guatemalan trans woman, has been [released from immigration detention](#). Polanco spent periods of time in protective solitary confinement during her six months at the all-male detention facility in Florence, Arizona, where she also endured sexual violence and harassment from guards and detainees.

The outlet [Mic](#) published an article about the placement of children in solitary confinement, entitled One Dark Side of the Criminal Justice System that Everyone Should Know.

The Texas House of Representatives [has passed legislation](#) requiring that prison officials perform mental health assessments on individuals before placing them in solitary confinement.

Louisianas [The Advocate](#) covered the case of Kenny Zulu Whitemore, who has spent more than 30 years in solitary confinement at Angola Prison. His lawyers have filed a federal civil rights lawsuit demanding his return to general population.

[The Washington Post](#) published an article examining the role interfaith activists have played in the fight against solitary confinement.

According to [The Daily News](#), jail officials on Rikers Island want to override lenient solitary rules to punish violent inmates. Under a little-known section of the new rules, the Corrections chief can override the 30-day limit on segregation if the individual engages in persistent acts of violence, other than self harm.

The Department of Justice [reached a settlement](#) with Leflore County, Mississippi, to address security and facility conditions at the juvenile detention center. Under the agreement, solitary confinement will not be used as a form of disciplinary punishment, and placement in isolation will be limited to a cool-down period of one hour maximum.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. Shes written for the New York Times, Wired, BuzzFeed News, Solitary Watch, and other outlets. Find her [@stahlidarity](#) and at [stahlidarity.com](#).

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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