

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Lizzie Kane](#) | February 22, 2021

Nonprofit organization Citizens for Prison Reform and the Open MI Door Campaign [co-released a report](#) called Solitary: The Family Experience. The report discusses the effects of solitary confinement on the families of individuals held in segregation by the Michigan Department of Corrections. The groups also provide recommendations for alternatives to solitary confinement.

[Undark took a look](#) at the issue of solitary confinement and COVID-19 transmission in prisons. Solitary confinement is being used as a method to slow the spread of the virus in prisons and jails across the United States. Yet, as others have reported, it is possible that solitary confinement may cause an increase in transmission rates. This increase occurs because people in segregation have limited abilities to communicate, meaning they may be disinclined or unable to report symptoms.

The past week brought two federal appellate opinions important to the issue of solitary confinement:

First, as the [Pennsylvania Real-Time News reports](#), a federal appeals court ruled that Roderick Johnson a man who was formerly on death row in Pennsylvania and has now been exonerated can continue to sue his former prison because he was kept in solitary confinement for 20 years. He is arguing that his civil rights were violated. The order can be found [here](#).

Second, as David Fathi of the ACLU's National Prison Project summarized: Last Friday the Second Circuit affirmed the denial of relief under the Convention against Torture to a man who had endured more than six years of solitary confinement in Italy. Judge Pooler wrote a blistering dissent that begins Prolonged solitary confinement is one of the true horrors of the modern day penal system, and exhaustively recites the evidence of its devastating effects. That order can be found [here](#).

The Stop Solitary for Kids Campaign announced that it received \$1 million from Arnold Ventures to focus on racial justice, elevating the voices of those directly impacted, and supporting the decarceration of young people. Read the full press release [here](#).

According to a [thread on Twitter from Keri Blakinger](#), a journalist at the Marshall Project, the winter storm in Texas has caused severe problems within the criminal justice system. Incarcerated people have suffered through a lack of heat, no extra blankets, cold and inadequate food, and severe staffing shortages which have left people on lockdown in their cold cells.

[Reuters reported](#) that the Biden administration launched a review of Guantanamo Bay US military prison in Cuba that was established after 9/11 and has been widely criticized by human rights advocates. White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said that it is the administration's goal and our intention to close the facility. The prison once held as many as 800 individuals and was notorious for its torturous conditions, including the use of prolonged solitary confinement, which led to hunger strikes and suicides.

Lizzie Kane was an intern for Solitary Watch in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021. Her work has also appeared in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Dallas Morning News, and Charlotte Observer.

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

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.

My son was in the SHU for two months after being transferred, for quarantine. At one point, due to the cold snap, he was given bottled water and told to piss in the bottles and shit in a trash bag because the toilets weren't working. It's medieval in these prisons.

Try getting your Guantanamo facts right!!

Rolling eyes loudly

Thank you for this illumination, cruelty and incompetence of authority is deplorable and their actions reflect on us all for our acts of omission and denial.

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