

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | April 6, 2014



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.

Home Secretary Theresa May is again pressing the British High Court to [allow the extradition of Haroon Aswat](#) to the United States. Last year, the European Court of Human Rights blocked Aswat's extradition, ruling that he should be protected against the possibility of being placed in long-term isolation because of his mental illness.

[Democracy Now](#) ran a long segment on solitary confinement, which featured a survivor of solitary, a family member of someone who died on the inside, and several others.

[The New York Times](#) posted an article and a short video about Joseph Ponte, the newly appointed correction commissioner of New York City. At his previous post overseeing Maine's state prisons, Ponte significantly reduced the numbers of people placed in solitary.

In this month's issue of the [COBA magazine](#), members of the Correctional Officers Benevolent Association encourage readers not to believe the hype that solitary confinement in NYC's jails constitutes abuse. COBA President Norman Seabrook has criticized the appointment of Joseph Ponte, claiming that Ponte's position on solitary will endanger the lives of prison guards.

[The Washington Post](#) published an Op-Ed by Mary Buser, formerly the assistant chief of mental health on Rikers Island: Time and again, I felt that this [solitary confinement] had all the earmarks of torture. But I brushed the word from my mind, reminding myself that I lived in a civilized country that prohibits such things. Besides, the occupants of these cells had done something to warrant this punishment. Yet no matter how hard I tried to rationalize it, I knew in my heart that something was very wrong.

The editorial staff at [The Baltimore Sun](#) called on Maryland legislators to pass a bill mandating an independent investigation into the state's use of solitary confinement.

[Mother Jones](#) reported on two on-going lawsuits that challenge conditions on the inside: in the first lawsuit, the Justice Department alleges that Ohio has [excessively subjected children](#) with mental illness to solitary confinement; in the other lawsuit, a disability rights advocacy group claims that Montana [violated the constitutional ban](#) on cruel and unusual punishment by placing individuals with mental illness in extreme isolation for months and years at a time.

Writing in [The Portland Phoenix](#), Lance Tapley explores the criminalization of those with mental illness, and the role solitary confinement plays in this process.

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

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 [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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Cathy start writing your elected officials, you are a voter and tax payer they dont care hes in danger, if he joins a gang or kills inside he could survive only to be kept in isolation read about Tommy Silverstein, there is no help except your voice, sometimes petitions work. Godspeed your son home

My son just turned 16 and has been in solitary since sept 25 2013. He has not been convicted only accused . He was diagnosed at 7 yrs old adhd odd. Now depression dekusional.paranoid etc. Afraid to take meds cause dont know what they mite give..no school.able to see n hear adult inmates .thats illegal . They are now saying ge is a snitch maricopa county sheriff has put him in extreme dangerhelp please..

The issue of solitary confinement is simply too scary, for many of us, to face head on. Its like pondering concentration camps: how does one?

As solitary confinement is an aspect of the American justice system, which is broken beyond repair due to the tough on crime, retaliatory mentality that is so pervasive amongst its citizens, I fear endlessly for my children and so many others.

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