

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Aviva Stahl](#) | March 15, 2015

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.

A US District Judge has [ruled in favor of several plaintiffs](#) named in an ongoing class action lawsuit against the use of solitary confinement in California prisons. Incarcerated individuals who were in long term-term isolation at Pelican Bay but have since been transferred will be permitted to remain eligible as class members in the case, filed by the [Center for Constitutional Rights](#).

Senator Dick Durbin [was interviewed on Peoria Public Radio](#). Ninety-five percent of the people who go to prison end up out of prison someday, and if you turn a person out whos been damaged mentally by the segregation, then its a risk to everyone else outside, once theyre released, he said.

Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, [accused United States authorities](#) of refusing him entry to state and federal prisons, particularly those facilities that regularly utilize solitary confinement. The numbers [of people in solitary] are staggering but even worse is the length of termsIt is not uncommon for people to spend 25, 30 years and even more in solitary confinement, he said.

[The Hill](#) blog published an op-ed by Antonio Ginatta, advocacy director for the US program at Human Rights Watch, in response to the internal review of confinement practices recently published by the federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The path away from prisoner isolation is clear, and its time for BOP to start walking it, he writes.

A federal appeals court has [reversed a 2013 ruling](#), thus allowing the state of Virginia to automatically house those on death row in solitary confinement. The district court, perhaps correctly, described the isolation that characterizes Virginias death row as dehumanizing. But the Supreme Court has long held that state correctional officials have broad latitude to set prison conditions as they see fit, wrote Judge Motz in the majority opinion.

A federal judge has ruled that Washington [violated the Constitution](#) by holding people with mental illness in jails for weeks or even months while they awaited competency evaluations. Many of these individuals were held in solitary confinement during this time period.

[Debate rages on](#) in Dane County, Wisconsin, about how to proceed with renovations to the local jail. Sheriff David Mahoney and others have called for the creation of additional special needs housing in the jail, since many people with mental illness are currently housed in solitary confinement; activists with the Young, Gifted and Black Coalition, meanwhile, have maintained that jail renovations will not solve the human rights and racial justice issues that produce overincarceration.

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](#).

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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