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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | March 5, 2017

Last April, dozens of immigrant detainees went on hunger strike at a privately-run Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Georgia, prompting staff to lock them up in solitary confinement. Spencer Woodman reported the story for [the Verge](#).

[GQ](#) published an in-depth look into solitary confinement. It is brutal. It is torture by definition. It destroys the mind, body, and soul, making rehabilitation next to impossible. It is also outrageously expensive, and it doesn't work. Yet at the end of the Obama era, and the dawn of Trump's, isolation is as widely used as ever in the American penal system.

As many as 60,000 current and former immigrant detainees may join a class-action lawsuit against GEO Group, one of the United States largest private prison companies. According to [the Daily Beast](#), GEO Group forced detainees to work for extremely low wages or for no wages at all, and in some cases threatened detainees with solitary confinement as punishment if they refused to work.

A revised bill to reduce the use of solitary confinement in Minnesota has been introduced in the state legislature, but concerns remain about just how much it will cost to implement the changes. According to [the Star Tribune](#), in the original bill, inmates could only go into isolation for committing a violent infraction. The new language adds escape attempts and major rule violations including terroristic threats, extortion, smuggling and hostage taking to the list of solitary-punishable offenses. The new version also calls for at least one hour of out-of-cell time every day, down from three hours in the original bill.

Spike TV [aired the first](#) of a six-part documentary entitled Time: The Kalief Browder Story, which was executive produced by Jay Z. As a teenager, Browder was arrested for allegedly stealing a backpack and spent three years locked up at Rikers Island, where he served long stints in solitary confinement. Browder committed suicide in 2015, at the age of 22.

Two teens held at the Onondaga County Justice Center in New York have been removed from isolation, and a plan is in place to transfer the 29 teenagers held at the facility to the Hillbrook Juvenile Center, according to [CorrectionsOne](#).

Violence in Colorado's Division of Youth Corrections facilities has risen a great deal in recent years, according to a report [published](#) by the Colorado Child Safety Coalition. The Coalition found that, in 2016 alone, DYC staff placed youth in solitary confinement 2240 times and used physical restraints more than 3600 times.

The New Mexico House Judiciary Committee [held hearings](#) on a bill that would limit the use of solitary confinement and require detailed reporting on the use of isolation in the states' jails and prisons. If passed, the legislation would prohibit jails and prisons in the state from putting children, pregnant women and those with a known serious mental illness or disability in isolation, defined as 22 hours or more per day alone in a cell. A [local outlet](#) published an account of the experiences of one New Mexico resident, Joshua Saiz, who spent a year in solitary between 2013 and 2014.

According to the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, Jason Robb and Siddique Abdullah Hasan two people accused of participating in the Lucasville Prison Uprising began refusing food on Monday February 27th to protest a 90 day restriction on their access to phone, email and video visit communication. The two men have been condemned to death and held in solitary confinement since the uprising in 1993.

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](#)

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 5, 2022

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