

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/10/24/waiting-for-the-world-to-give-us-a-reason-to-live-solitary-confinement-in-utah/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | October 24, 2012

Utah State Prisons [Uinta 1](#) facility serves as the prisons super-maximum security unit, where inmates are held in solitary confinement. Inmates in Uinta 1 may be there for disciplinary infractions, notoriety reasons, protective custody, or because they are security/escape risks. The unit is divided into eight sections with twelve inmates in each section, for a total of 96 maximum inmates. Currently, there are 90 inmates in Uinta 1. The Utah Department of Corrections, in response to a government records request by Solitary Watch, claims it has no records regarding its use of segregation.

Several inmates have recently written Solitary Watch about the conditions in Uinta 1.

L., who has been in Uinta 1 for five months and previously served 28 months there, reports that he is only able to leave his cell three days a week, for a shower and 1 hour alone in a concrete yard. He reports that, in being transported to a 15 minute shower, we have to wear a spit mask over our faces and handcuffed from behind with a dog leash hooked to us.

The rest of the time except on the shower days we are locked down in our cells with the door window closed so you can't see out, he writes.

A., who has been in Uinta 1 for a year, adds that, just the other day, the [Correctional Officers] came and shook our cells down and took away all of our hygiene. They took away shampoo, lotion, conditioner, everything they also don't give us anything to clean our cells with.

A. is in Uinta 1 for his own protection, following what he says was a decision to leave gang life after much self-study. Despite this, he says, he is treated as if he committed a serious offense.

Inmate Brandon Green, who has frequently [written](#) on the conditions of Uinta 1, describes the environment in Uinta 1 as reinforcing a vicious cycle in which inmates placed in solitary usually end up back not long after they are released. Green, who has been in Uinta 1 for five years, previously served 18 months in Uinta 1 before a brief period on parole before returning to Utah State Prison. He has been held in Uinta 1 following an escape attempt and refusal to take psychiatric drugs, which he says will only harm his health.

So alone. So much internal turbulence with nothing like T.V., radio, magazines or conversation to hide [this pain] beneath, he writes, a man leaves this place to go to general population or to a less secure facility where you have electronics and a cellie. You can just count down the months before he will return. We learn we can do without anything. And we become content with nothing. The more they take away from us year after year, the more family disappears, the more one doesn't want to go home, doesn't want a wife and a job and bills and an American future. It is like waiting for the world to give us a reason to live. But the world just keeps giving us reasons to not give a shit.

This situation leads many inmates to report severe mental health problems that are aggravated by the long-term isolation. The prison routinely responds to such crises by placing suicidal inmates in a strip cell, where they are to be alone in a cell with and checked every fifteen minutes. Included in many of these cells are cameras.

L. writes that if someone is gonna kill themselves they take them and out to a strip cell and you sleep on the hard floor and treated like a dog.

A. reports that if I lose control because of something I have no control over, they'll punish me and put me on strip cell for three days when a mentally ill inmate feels suicidal, they send us to the infirmary to be on suicide watch then we get from suicide watch back to Uinta 1 and the staff put us back in the strip cell when we get back to Uinta 1.

In Uinta 1, suicide is not an uncommon occurrence. In 2009, two prisoners in Uinta 1 committed suicide. One was Danny Gallegos, who was found [hanged](#) in his cell in June. Another was a friend of Green, Spencer Spider Hooper, a Pink Floyd fan and singer on medications for schizophrenia and depression. Months after a previous suicide attempt, Hooper was found dead in February 2009, hanging in his cell.

A. and L. also independently confirm that sandbags at the cell doors of inmates gather bugs, which enter their cells. They got sandbags

around all the cells but never pick them up and clean under them so theres all kinds of bugs and dirt that comes right under our doors, A. writes.

Green also writes about the declining array of services provided to Uinta 1 inmates. Years ago indigent captives received five envelopes a week. Now its one. We had five outside contacts a week. Now one. We used to be fed enough to stay full. Now we are starved. We used to have shampoo and lotion. Now we dont. We grumble for an hour each time something is taken from us. Then move right along to inventing the creative willpower to survive with no penpals and mail, a full stomach or clean hair. Moving right along. We expect tragedy.

Solitary Watch will continue to report on Uinta 1 as more information becomes available.

Brandon Green welcomes letters. His mailing address is:

Brandon Green #147075, Uinta One 305, Utah State Prison, PO Box 250, Draper, Utah 84020. His blog, updated by an outside supporter, can be seen [here](#).

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watchs first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 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.

I just dont understand how any human can treat another human like this! the judges, lawyers, cops, jailers, etc it is a sad day in this world where human life means nothing to so many people! From murderers where they kill another human(if they meant to do it I dont feel to sorry for them as they are getting off easier then they should), judges, cops, lawyers, jailers to allow any human to be treated this way.

I urge the non US citizens to contact their governments to put pressure on the US government to stop the inhumane treatment of our inmates. It is an embarrassment to our country and to little to late is being done to help with these conditions. Even if reforms were to happen tomorrow, the long term affects are there. I thank each and every person who reads these articles, the words are the seeds of change.

I quote from this article:

This situation leads many inmates to report severe mental health problems that are aggravated by the long-term isolation. The prison routinely responds to such crises by placing suicidal inmates in a strip cell, where they are to be alone.

We used to be fed enough to stay full. Now we are starved.

According to the Washington Post article below Afghans with mental illness are chained to a concrete cell for 40 days with little food for treatment for their illness.

The title of the article is:

At Afghan shrine, ancient treatment for mental illness

Legend has it that those with mental disorders will be healed after spending 40 days in one of the shrines 16 tiny concrete cells. They live on a subsistence diet of bread, water and black pepper

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/at-afghan-shrine-ancient-treatment-for-a-new-epidemic/2012/10/23/570ce338-187f-11e2-a346-f24efc680b8d_story.html

Most Americans find such stories about Afghan culture to be proof they are a backward people but how much more progressive are we when we lock up our own mentally ill in solitary, not for 40 days but for decades?

Which system is more backward?

I am a Canadian and I am not anti American . I love the American people but I must say they are a little too harsh with prisoners. The US government is quick to criticize other countries who have harsh conditions for prisoners but have neglected to look in their backyard.

They criticize us the Canadians for being too lenient.

Thanks

And stay strong!

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