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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | April 30, 2017

Guards at the Milwaukee County Jail [may face criminal charges](#), after a man in solitary confinement died of dehydration due to the water in his cell being cut off. Terrill Thomas, 38, who had a history of mental illness, had his water turned off as punishment for flooding his cell and it stayed turned off for days on end. Thomas died after a week.

The Human Rights Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law [released a report](#) on the conditions on the states death row. The right to be free from torture is an absolute human right, and it is submitted that the current conditions of confinement on Texas death row, including mandatory indefinite isolation, amounts to a severe and relentless act of torture, the report concludes.

Supreme Court Justice Breyer [addressed the issue of solitary confinement](#) in a short opinion about the case of an Arizona prisoner on death row, whose petition was ultimately rejected by the Court on procedural grounds. What legitimate purpose does it serve to hold any human being in solitary confinement for 40 years awaiting execution? Breyer asked.

Three Muslim individuals held at the Sterling Correctional Facility in Colorado [have filed a lawsuit in federal court](#), alleging that that they faced religious discrimination from guards. In April 2016, the three men were pepper sprayed after they tried to enter a multipurpose room for their weekly prayers; at least one of the men said he was thrown in solitary in retaliation for filing a grievance about the alleged abuse.

An incarcerated CIA whistleblower has filed a complaint against the Bureau of Prisons, alleging that he was falsely accused of threatening a corrections officer and defying an order, and wrongly placed in solitary confinement for three days. [Shadow Proof](#) reported on the case of former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling, who is incarcerated at the Federal Correctional Institution in Englewood, Colorado.

Kansas is shifting away from the use of solitary confinement, according to a local outlet. On April 24, there were 616 inmates in solitary confinement across Kansas state prisons, reports [the Topeka Capital-Journal](#). Six months ago, that number was 732. A year ago, it was 833. The state has also said it is employing alternative programs to reduce the number of people in isolation.

According to [the San Diego Reader](#), a longtime member of a powerful white supremacist gang, Elliot Scott Grizzle, has filed a lawsuit against the County of San Diego alleging he was improperly placed in solitary confinement. According to his handwritten complaint, filed in federal court on April 25, Sheriff's deputies placed Grizzle, without providing him any reasons as to why, in solitary confinement upon his arrest on August 3, 2016. He requested corrections officials to review his segregation on numerous occasions. In addition, states Grizzles complaint, his segregated cell is brightly lit and is positioned near a loud television set, and even louder inmates, which in turn has resulted in a loss of sleep.

An [appeals court has ruled](#) that New York state prison officials acted legally when they placed an individual in solitary after he refused to allow guards to inspect a heart-shaped object located under the skin of his penis. We find that substantial evidence supports the determination that petitioners placement in the general population would pose a risk to the security and safety of the facility, ruled the Appellate Division of the state Supreme Court.

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](#).

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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