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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | March 26, 2017

Milwaukee County Sheriff officials have [said they are not responsible](#) for the death of a newborn at their downtown jail, which occurred in July 2016. The mother of the dead infant, Shad Swayzer, was 8 months pregnant when she was arrested. She was subsequently placed in solitary confinement. Swayzer says that when she went into labor she asked for help from a guard, who ignored her. The baby was pronounced dead at the jail several hours later.

Disability Rights Oregon released an investigative report documenting the extensive use of solitary confinement, restraint and routine use of force against those with mental illness held at the Multnomah County Jail. According to [The Skanner](#), One inmate, referred to Mr. Clifton in the report, suffers from serious psychosis and was placed on suicide watch. After his soap, book and mattress were removed, Clifton grew exceedingly upset. When he tried to run, guards used a taser on him and carried him back to the cell, where he began to bang his head against the floor. A deputy straddled Clifton and forced him into a restraint chair, where he remained for over six hours.

A lawsuit against the state of Virginia will continue after a US Court of Appeals [reversed an earlier decision](#) by a district judge. Changes on Virginias death row have already been made as a result of the lawsuit, which alleged that the conditions of extreme isolation on the unit constituted cruel and unusual punishment. The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia said in a statement that temporary relief of harsh, inhumane conditions in a state prison is not enough to cast aside a legal claim of unconstitutional treatment.

Minnesotas Star Tribune published an [opinion piece](#) calling for passage of a legislative bill, which if passed would codify regulations with regards to the use of solitary confinement. Imagine living in a room the size of your bathroom for 600 days. The lights never go off, and there are no windows, writes masters student Sara Lederman. This is the reality of some prisoners experiencing solitary confinement in Minnesota, and we are all paying for it.

A federal district judge has [granted a preliminary injunction](#) against Rutherford County in Tennessee. The injunction prohibits staff at the Rutherford County Juvenile Detention Center from placing children in solitary confinement, at least until an ongoing lawsuit is resolved. Last month, Judge Aleta Traugher certified a class action lawsuit against the county after the mother of a 15-year-old boy sued the county for putting her developmentally disabled son in isolation for five days.

A former New York City corrections officer penned an op-ed for [City Limits](#) condemning the use of shackling and restraint desks at Rikers Island. The jail has said these restraint devices are good alternatives to placing young people in solitary confinement. We know what works, and just shackling or isolating people will not solve the problem, wrote David Fullard. We simply must develop the will to expend the money for services and staff, rather than on restraint chairs and solitary cells.

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.

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by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

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by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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