

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | April 22, 2018

A press release from the office of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin announced the re-introduction of a [bill](#) called the Solitary Confinement Reform Act, which would mandate a reduction in the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) use of solitary confinement, improve mental health services in BOP facilities, provide resources to facilities to aid in enforcing these changes, and prohibit the use of solitary confinement for the protection of LGBTQ individuals. Senator Christopher Coons, who sponsored the bill along with Durbin, Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren, and Patrick Leahy, said, The evidence remains clear: our current use of solitary confinement doesn't achieve its intended goal of increasing prison safety or stopping criminal behavior. Moreover, widespread overuse of solitary confinement is causing lasting, irreparable harm to those inmates subjected to it.

*Courthouse News Service* [reported](#) that men held at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, filed a federal complaint this week, claiming that the facility, run by private prison company CoreCivic, has been forcing individuals held in their custody to work for \$1 a day or less, in violation of anti-trafficking laws. While CoreCivic argues that the work program is voluntary, the lead plaintiffs claim that those who refuse to work are threatened with up to 30 days in solitary confinement and deprivation of basic necessities. The complaint alleges that those who participate in the work program receive two-person cells with private bathrooms, while those who fail to participate are held in overcrowded dormitories they call El Gallinero, or the Chicken Coop. According to the lawsuit, the current work program, which avoids paying minimum wage and providing benefits to its laborers, allows CoreCivic to greatly reduce operating costs and significantly increase its profit. In a related story, *The Intercept* [reported](#) that Stewart Detention Center allegedly placed Arafat Hasan Riad in solitary confinement after he requested two days worth of wages, amounting to \$8, that he said were owed to him. Riad, who spent ten days in solitary, stated: Even one day 24 hours in segregation is very difficult. Every human needs to talk to somebody else. But in segregation, I am only alone.

Phil Hartsfield, who is incarcerated at Statesville Correctional Center in Illinois, [published](#) a vivid firsthand account on *Truthout* of an extended lockdown on his tier. Hartsfield and the men in neighboring cells nervously await and then endure a visit from Orange Crush, the prison's tactical team, which arrives in full riot gear to shake down cells, engage in arbitrary bullying, and generally make a show of force that serves no other purpose, he writes, than to instill fear and misery.

*The Dispatch* [covered](#) the recent trial determining whether the East Mississippi Correctional Facility (EMCF) violated the 8th Amendment rights of those held in the facility by intentionally neglecting to provide proper mental health care, medical care, and inflicting solitary confinement. The article pointed out that the private prison company Management and Training Corporation (MTC) currently operates EMCF and has failed to fill nearly half the staff positions, resulting in the prison being run by gangs, according to an EMCF officer. The author of the article recalled the dozens of testimonies he heard at the trial. The horror stories were sickening: rats, roaches, rapes, beatings, solitary confinement for weeks in total darkness, deathly ill patients denied medicines, inedible food, fires in cells to get attention, blood covered cells from suicidal cuttings, locks that are easily defeated allowing gangs to have the run of the prison. The decision on how to move forward now lies in the hands of Federal District Court Judge William Barbour.

*The Independent* [reported](#) that three major medical organizations, the British Medical Association (BMA), the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health, have released a statement calling for an end to solitary confinement for young people. The statement asserts: Various studies indicate an increased risk of suicide or self-harm amongst those placed in solitary confinement. As children are still in the crucial stages of developing socially, psychologically and neurologically, there are serious risks of solitary confinement causing long-term psychiatric and developmental harm. The medical groups expressed the urgency of enforcing this ban and called for the government, in the meantime, to provide proper health care to those still kept in solitary confinement. It is estimated that 40 percent of boys in the British jail system have been held in solitary confinement.

*Broadly* [reported](#) that LeslieAnn Manning, a transgender woman previously held at Sullivan Correctional Facility in New York, was awarded \$100,000 in damages from a settlement with the New York Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) for the sexual assault she experienced, the indifference of the prison staff to her assault, and her subsequent placement in solitary confinement, or protective custody (PC). Manning recalled, Psychological trauma of being locked in a cell for 23 hours a day is pretty traumatic. You feel like the walls are closing in around you. Manning also noted that she did not receive any counseling or mental health

care following her rape, besides a staff member speaking through her cell door. Manning continues to be held in a male prison, Wende Correctional Facility, where she claims to still experience sexual harassment.

Valerie Kiebala was a contributing writer and editorial and project manager for Solitary Watch, and is now the media director of Straight Ahead, which is building a decarceration movement throughout Pennsylvania. Her work has also appeared in The Root, Truthout, the Chicago Reporter, and Shadowproof.

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 [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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