

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2013/07/09/as-30000-join-california-prison-hunger-strike-corrections-officials-issue-guidelines-on-starvation/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | July 9, 2013



On Monday, July 8th, California prisoners launched their third hunger strike in two years, protesting conditions in the Security Housing Units (SHUs), where thousands of prisoners are held in segregation units designed to limit communication. While the largest one-day participation of the prior two strikes rose to over 11,000, Monday's strike began with a historic 30,000 people inside California's prisons refusing breakfast and lunch.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) reported that two-thirds of California's prisons are known to have reported meal refusals, including four out-of-state facilities. Also according to the *Times*, 2,300 individuals did not attend work or educational classes, with many of them presumably doing so in solidarity with the hunger strikers.

In a phone call with Solitary Watch this morning, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) spokeswoman Terry Thornton stated that updated numbers will not be available until later this afternoon, and Thornton emphasized that a hunger strike is not officially declared until an individual refuses nine consecutive meals, and that while inmates may refuse state-issued meals, they may also eat canteen items.

Solitary Watch inquired with CDCR as to the review process, which began last year, of more than 3,000 SHU prisoners throughout the state placed there for being affiliated with certain prison gangs. CDCR has stated its intention of reviewing all individuals in the SHU to determine whether or not they should be: retained in the SHU, placed in the Step Down Program by which they could hypothetically get out of the SHU in four years, or transferred to the general population immediately.

According to Thornton, as of June 28th, 382 reviews have been completed. Of them, 208 were approved for immediate transfer to the general population, indicating that they were not engaged in gang activity; 115 were placed in the Step Down Program; and the remaining 59 were retained in either the SHU or Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU). The 59 were retained either for undefined safety reasons or because they were dropping out of their gangs. Thornton told Solitary Watch that these reviews will continue despite the hunger strike, and does not foresee these reviews being disrupted by strike activity.

Thornton also stated that lines of communication between CDCR and prisoner representatives remain open and that there has been ongoing communication between strike leaders and prison officials.

In the meantime, the state has issued guidelines on how to deal with prisoners who are on hunger strike, including those who are starving and near death. This morning the California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS) issued a [press release](#) outlining policies, procedures, and care guides for use during a prison hunger strike. The release, which suggests that officials are preparing for a prolonged strike, is accompanied by several detailed documents.

One of these documents is a guide for health care practitioners titled CCHCS Mass Hunger Strike, Fasting & Refeeding Care Guide, and includes guidelines on managing the health care of prisoners through various stages of fasting and their voluntary refeeding after a period of starvation, which presents health care risks of its own. It includes a series of educational handouts describing the risks of permanent damage or death from refusing nutrition, and advises them to fill out advance directive form if you do NOT want health care staff to give you medical care when you are not able to speak, and Health care staff will not give you food or fluid as long as you make it clear that you do not want them to.

Another policy document includes a section on Informed Consent and Intervention, which states:

Health care staff shall grant inmate-patients autonomy in health care decisions related to nutrition and shall not force feed the inmate-patient unless one of the following criteria are met:

Forced feeding (enteral or parenteral nutrition support) shall not take place except in a licensed health care facility by licensed clinical staff.

Both documents suggest that CDCR does not plan to undertake the kind of mass force-feeding that has been so controversial at Guantanamo. They also suggest that the state is willing to countenance a long and possibly deadly hungerstrike rather than meet the demands laid out by the participants.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's 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

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I'm wondering if California prisoners have access to Advance Directive forms. In the past, prisoners protested for better medical care. If they can't get this medical waiver, they will have medical intervention if they become unresponsive which is what I'm suspecting most prisoners don't want.

I'm wondering if California prisoners participating in the hunger strike have access to an Advanced Directive form. In the past, prisoners have protested for better medical care as a condition to end their hunger strike.

After all these guys are no angels, they can not play well with custody or other inmates. There is a reason they are in SHU and ADSEG and it is not because of being a gang member, if that was the case most inmates would be in SHU/ADSEG

They are men of free will, they should be allowed to make their own decisions. Dying may be preferable to being confined to a small cell for years. It is their choice, it will save the taxpayers \$55,000/yr for each one that dies

So the state is willing to countenance a long and possibly deadly hunger strike rather than meet the demands laid out by the participants.? Rather amazing huh?

Sometimes I wonder just who we really are as a country,,,

Well, time will tell.

I am in solidarity to end solitary confinement and end the inhumane treatment of all those young and old locked up in our prisons.

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