

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/03/05/un-human-rights-council-considers-solitary-confinement-in-u-s-prisons/>

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | March 5, 2012

This account, from the American Civil Liberties Union's [Blog of Rights](#), includes a link to the ACLU's full statement to the UN on solitary confinement in the United States, as well as to the report by UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez.

The ACLU's Amy Fetting appeared before the U.N. Human Rights Council today to condemn the use of solitary confinement in the United States, following a [written statement](#) we submitted last month urging the Council to address this widespread violation of human rights. Also appearing today was Juan Mendez, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, who has [said before](#) that solitary confinement can amount to torture and today called for a review and reduction of the use of solitary confinement as a matter of human rights. Mendez has also called on the United States to allow him to visit to investigate the use of solitary confinement in U.S. supermax prisons; the U.S. has yet to respond.

The U.S. is unique among nations in its [use of solitary confinement](#) as an integral and regular component of its treatment of prisoners. Though there are no official numbers, a conservative estimate is that about 80,000 human beings are locked alone for 22 hours or more each day in small, often windowless cells, isolated from any human contact (with the exception of very limited contact with prison staff), with no access to classes, job training, drug treatment, work or any other kind of rehabilitative programming. The mentally ill, disproportionately represented in solitary confinement, often become even more desperately ill, sometimes engaging in self-mutilation or even suicide. Even some healthy prisoners begin to exhibit symptoms of mental illness after a short time in solitary. Thousands of youth are also locked away in this manner each day, in both adult and juvenile facilities.

The use of solitary confinement in the U.S. is an urgent and pervasive problem deserving of the world stage and worldwide condemnation. The U.S. should implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, but greater global attention and action will be needed to ensure this nation's use of solitary confinement is consistent with international human rights standards.

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets [@solitarywatch](#).

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 have a friend I wrote to SW about thrown into freezing cold isolation indefinitely for having risque magazine pictures, didn't hear from SW or anyone if isolation/SHU/AD-SEG were used for dangerous behavior with a finite duration it's fine, but it's over used. And the UN the ACLU doctors judges, specialists can not not seem to stop this crazy train. I get no answers from legislators I write either. So is there a solution? Now with the economy bad you'd think mass incarceration would let up maybe it will but all I've noticed is more proactive programs in prison are cut. isolation rises. is there a solution?

My good friend was given 90 days in SMU for hugging and kissing her girlfriend. No sexual contact was involved whatsoever. A simple quick hug and kiss.

seemingly the populations more effected by the mass incarceration and the manner of treatment the women and men are subject too; are those populations that are *locked inside a type of apathy* and equally devastating is the *assimilation* on a deep level, JUST DO THE TIME CUZ MY GYRL AND FAMILY WILL HOLD ME DOWN. these are the blockades against unifying families of incarcerated youth/families of those in supermaxs, families period!!!! under what umbrella can those family members of physically ill elderly be accessed? as a support person for men facing challenges of prostate cancer, Diabetes and high blood pressure. I CAN ONLY IMAGE WHAT THOSE NUMBERS ARE LIKE BEHIND THOSE WALLS AND *THE HOLES*, given the manner of food substances they are forced to live on year after year. Food is Medicine and theirs is very suspect.

Seniors, The Mentally Ill, and our youth are forcibly housed in 23hr a day lockdown Fashionable called RHU and SMU, plain and simple the Hole. Its Torture under the United States watchful eye. Solitary Confinement places the prisoner alone with themselves, dying inside from lack of human contact. Fact is prisoners are hurting themselves and taking their lives during this torture period. Do the Right Thing And Shut Down All Solitary Confinement Units Throughout the United States Enough is Enough

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