

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/1152-nrcat-applauds-obama-administration-for-historic-progress-in-efforts-to-confront-solitary-confinement-in-us-prisons>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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WASHINGTON Today, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture applauded the release of the Department of Justice [Report and Recommendations Concerning the Use of Restrictive Housing](#), which offers historic and comprehensive guidelines on the use of solitary confinement in United States prisons. Describing solitary as "an affront to our common humanity," in a [Washington Post op-ed](#), President Obama announced swift adoption of the more than [fifty "Guiding Principles"](#) contained within the report, which set new standards in federal prisons and provide guidelines for reform in all prisons and jails throughout the country. New federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) policies include a ban on placing youth in solitary confinement, a ban on using restrictive housing to punish low level offenses, and diversion programs for LGBT incarcerated people in protective custody and for individuals with serious mental illness. And, most importantly, the BOP will be required for the first time to post monthly data regarding its use of restricted housing system-wide, providing critical information to guide future reforms.

In response to this historic development, Rev. Ron Stief, executive director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture said:

"We celebrate this moment of significant progress in our efforts to end the torture of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails. We grieve with the families of those like Kalief Browder, whose lives have been lost as a result of this travesty that has touched more than 100,000 held in conditions of isolation on any given day. As communities of faith, we recognize that the historic recommendations made by this Administration are in the best interest of the wellness of corrections staff, those who are incarcerated, and the communities to which they will one day return. Indeed we stand with President Obama and Pope Francis in affirming the '[inalienable dignity](#)' of every human being which should be honored without exception.

"Following President Obama's July 2015 announcement that the Department of Justice would conduct a national review of the use of solitary confinement, NRCAT and its partners sent a [letter to the President](#) calling on the administration to ensure that such a review would lead to concrete recommendations to eliminate long-term isolation in United States prisons and jails. Though these guiding principles fall short of outlining a clear path to ending prolonged solitary confinement, we are confident that these guidelines promote critically needed steps on the road toward the elimination of this torture and urgently needed relief for thousands.

"We know that youth of color are far more likely to face the horrors Kalief Browder faced unjust and unnecessary solitary confinement - and we must address the drivers of these inequalities and disparities: race, poverty, and mental disability, at every level of our criminal justice system. These new guidelines are critical in order to confront the damage done to far too many in our communities.

"Addressing the misuse of solitary confinement is critical, but it is only one piece of the urgent work to fix our broken criminal justice system. That is why people of faith across the country must demand not only the swift implementation of these guidelines, but also the passage of legislation like the bipartisan Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act to further rectify the injustice prevalent in our corrections system."

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 300 religious organizations have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

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