

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Annalena Wolcke](#) | July 23, 2021

A group of more than 20 men at David Wade Correctional Center in Louisiana went on a hunger strike last week to call attention to the torture-like conditions they are experiencing. They are part of a program in which incarcerated people from another prison Elayn Hunt are sent to David Wade for intensive disciplinary segregation. The men say they have been beaten, denied medical attention and left in long-term solitary confinement with no hope or path out of the program, [reports Perilous Chronicle](#). Calling themselves the Hunts Forgotten, the men [published a letter](#) in which they list the abuses they have endured. Some of them have been held in solitary for up to two years, even though the program is officially 90 days long. Our hunger strike is our desperate plea for our voices to be heard, the men wrote.

A study conducted by researchers at Florida State University and the University of Cincinnati found that people who are sent to long-term solitary confinement are disproportionately young, male, Black, and suffer from mental health issues, [reports the Crime Report](#). Among other things, the study found that Black individuals make up 43 percent of the general prison population, but 63 percent of extended solitary management stays. Phys.org provided a more [detailed summary](#) of the study's findings.

Six men incarcerated at Miami Correctional Facility in Indiana filed a lawsuit alleging they were placed in solitary confinement where they were subjected to brutal and dangerous conditions, including living in total darkness for months and frequently being shocked from dangling live wires, [reports the Kokomo Tribune](#). Imagine being trapped in a small dark room where you were subject to being shocked by live electrical wires every time you attempted to move, Kenneth Falk of the ACLU of Indiana, which is representing the men, said in a press release. We wouldn't tolerate animals being held in such horrifying conditions, how can we tolerate them for people?

The whole system is not working for anyone: Massachusetts Senator Jamie Eldridge and Representative Brandy Fluker-Oakley have filed legislation that would improve mental health treatment of incarcerated individuals. [According to the Lowell Sun](#), the legislation is a direct response to a 2020 report by the U.S. Department of Justice that warned of multiple rights violations within the Department of Corrections. Among other directives, the proposed legislation would require prisons to transport an incarcerated person who says they are suicidal to an external mental health care facility, and it would remove officers who violate suicide prevention policies from mental health watch. Senator Eldridge said in an interview that a conversation with a man held in solitary confinement informed his decision to support the legislation. One of the things that I will just never forget is going to one of the solitary units at the Souza-Baranowski maximum security prison and speaking to a prisoner through his metal bars, who was in solitary confinement, saying that he was depressed and needed mental health support, Eldridge told the *Lowell Sun*.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana is pushing for an immigrant detention center in the state to be shut down, [reports KLFY](#). According to the ACLU and local protesters, the Pine Prairie ICE facility is misusing solitary confinement by placing people in prolonged solitary when they show COVID-19 symptoms or when they complain about a lack of sanitation in the facility. The fact that we are treating immigrants in detention in this way is unfortunately tantamount to torture in certain respects, said Nora Ahmed of the ACLU in an interview with KLFY.

[Unlock the Box](#), the national campaign to end solitary confinement, launched its new website last week. The campaign, which now supports local partners in 18 states, also began an 18-day social media campaign on July 18, the birthday of Nelson Mandela, who himself was held in solitary for 18 years. The [End Torture Now campaign](#) is calling for the end of prolonged solitary confinement in the United States, and compliance with the UN's Mandela Rules for the treatment of incarcerated persons.

Annalena Wolke Anna interned with Solitary Watch before beginning a masters degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Oxford, where her research focuses on ethnicity in German prisons.

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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