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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

close

Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | February 4, 2018

In a [Joint Budget Hearing](#) on Public Protection in Albany, New York, on January 30, New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera asked Acting Corrections Commissioner Anthony Annucci a question regarding the New Yorks use of solitary confinement. Rivera referred to Colorado corrections chief Rick Raemisch, who four years ago [spent 24 hours in solitary confinement](#), and credits his experience with helping inspire him to all but eliminate long-term solitary in his state. Rivera then asked Annucci if he, too, would be willing to spend a night in solitary in one of his own prisons, stating if were going to be ahead of the curve in this state as far as progressive policy, we should move in that direction. Annucci responded with a joke followed by a wide grin: That would probably be the best nights sleep Ive had in a long time. Despite modest reductions brought about by a New York Civil Liberties lawsuit, New York State prisons [still hold nearly 4,000 individuals in solitary](#) on average, according to advocates supporting the [Humane Alternatives to Long-Term \(HALT\) Solitary Confinement Act](#).

[According](#) to KQED, a group of six women filed a motion in U.S. District Court judge, claiming the Santa Rita Jail in Alameda County, California maltreats pregnant women, failing to provide medical care or adequate food, and intimidating, harassing, and physically abusing the women. The motion claims the conditions were so severe as to have resulted in two recent miscarriages, and a third woman giving birth, alone and unattended, in a solitary confinement cell. While the sheriffs office denied these claims, the former Opioid Treatment Program coordinator resigned from Santa Rita after witnessing the unethical medical treatment of pregnant inmates. The motion calls for the transfer of three pregnant women still currently in jail to community placements.

The Robesonian published an opinion [piece](#) this week, written by the executive director of Conservatives for Criminal Justice Reform, discussing the danger of releasing individuals directly from solitary confinement into society and arguing for an overall more rehabilitative approach to replace the punitive culture within the North Carolina prison system. The article raises questions about North Carolinas practice of mandatory minimums, which has led to many nonviolent offenders overcrowding prisons, and advocates for the implementation of more effective mental health care and substance abuse treatment programs.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has begun an [investigation](#) into the death of Yulio Castro-Garrido, a 33-year-old man from Cuba who was being held at Stewart Detention Center in Georgia, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility. Castro-Garrido had been diagnosed with pneumonia three weeks prior and had been allegedly denied medical care. Castro-Garridos death is the second at Stewart this year. Last May, 27-year-old Jean Jimenez-Joseph committed suicide after he had been placed in solitary confinement. A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) found the long waits for the provision of health care at Stewart undermine the protection of detainees rights, their humane treatment, and the provision of a safe and healthy environment.

In Justice Today [reported](#) that participants in the #OperationPUSH strike against low to no wages for the labor of incarcerated individuals in Floridas prison system have continued to strike since January 15, 2018. Participants in the work stoppage allegedly continue to face retaliation from prison officers, including placement in solitary confinement, prohibiting phone usage, and labeling participants with Security Threat Group status. While the Florida Department of Corrections spokesperson claimed that there have been no work stoppages, an Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee member said that people incarcerated in at least 14 Florida prisons have participated in the strike.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) published an [account](#) written by a young Nebraskan girl, who spent her sixteenth birthday in solitary confinement in a county jail after she violated juvenile probation by testing positive for marijuana and arriving after her curfew. The author describes her solitary confinement cell, the deprivation of basic hygiene items, and the psychological effects that she still experiences from isolation. Nebraska Senator Patty Pansing Brooks recently introduced a bill, LB870, advocating for limits on the use of solitary confinement for youth in Nebraska and an increase in alternatives to solitary.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution [reported](#) that three individuals held in the Georgia prison system have committed suicide within a two-and-a-half-week span, according to the Georgia Department of Corrections. In 2017, 15 individuals held in Georgia state prisons committed suicide, one of whom was on death row and three of whom were being held in solitary confinement. Two federal lawsuits

have claimed that Georgias use of an extreme form of solitary confinement called special management units isolate individuals for 24 hours a day, except for two and a half hours per week, when they are allowed to exercise alone.

The San Francisco Bay View published an [article](#) written by Keith Malik Washington, an incarcerated writer and activist. Washington's piece describes in detail the conditions, circumstances, and corruption that he asserts led to the suicide of Benjamin Larue in November 2017 in solitary confinement at the Eastham Ad-Seg Unit in Lovelady, Texas. Washington asserts that several of the prison staff neglected to provide the proper medical care and mental health care to Larue, instead placing him in solitary confinement, despite his known history of suicidal behavior. Washington cites the case *Ruiz vs. Estelle* that defined treatment as requiring the participation of trained mental health professional and asserting, Treatment must entail more than segregation.

The Guardian [reported](#) that Lauri Love, the 33-year-old British student accused of hacking into U.S. government websites, will not be extradited to the United States for his trial, according to a high court ruling announced by the lord chief justice of England and Wales, Lord Burnett of Maldon. The case is significant in that it deemed extradition a mental health risk for Love, who has Aspergers syndrome and severe depression, based largely on the harsh nature of the U.S. criminal justice system. Love's supporters argued that he could be sentenced to up to 99 years and placed in solitary confinement in a U.S. supermax prison, which would have had potentially catastrophic consequences including a risk of suicide, according to the head of legal casework at Liberty, an organization involved in Love's case. The case recalls those of Gary McKinnon, another accused British hacker with Aspergers, whom Britain [refused to extradite](#) in 2012; and Talha Ahsan, who in the same year was extradited for computer-related crimes linked to terrorism, despite also having Aspergers and other mental health issues. The decisions in both cases were made by current British Prime Minister Theresa May, who was then Home Secretary, and faced accusations of [anti-Muslim bias](#). Ahsan was [eventually cleared](#) of most charges by a U.S. court and returned to his family in London, but only after spending close to two years in solitary in a supermax prison in Connecticut.

Do you know of an important solitary confinement story that we've missed? Please email us at info@solitarywatch.com.

Valerie Kiebal 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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