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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | April 17, 2016

The US Field Army Manual on interrogation lists a technique called separation, or solitary confinement. In [recently released](#) talking points obtained through a Freedom of Information request, the Office of the Secretary of Defense noted that solitary does not fit the definition of cruel and unusual punishment, as it is a technique used extensively in US prisons and does not shock the conscience,

The Department of Justice has [closed its investigation](#) into the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, after the state was found to have made significant improvements in the use of solitary for people with serious mental illness or intellectual disabilities. Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta said, We commend the state for beginning to reform its system to ensure that prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities receive care, rather than suffer harm.

Activists, family members and formerly incarcerated people went to Albany to [advocate for the passage](#) of the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act. If passed, the bill would place strict limits on the number of days people could spend in isolation and create additional due process protections for people on the inside.

Under a new Texas Department of Criminal Justice policy, people in prison who are found to have active social media accounts [could end up in solitary confinement](#) for 45 days. Having a third party run the account like a family member is also a violation of the rules.

Tribeca premiered [Solitary](#), a film shot entirely in Virginias Red Onion State Prison. The festival also featured a [virtual reality project](#) that enables viewers to be immersed in an isolation cell for nine minutes.

The Department of Justices Civil Rights Division and the US Attorneys Office for the Northern District of Georgia are [conducting an investigation](#) into the treatment of LGBT people in the states prisons. The investigation comes after several trans people, including Ky Peterson and Ashley Diamond, have been denied hormone treatment and placed in solitary confinement, allegedly for their own protection.

The National Commission of Correctional Health Care, which represents physicians who work in prisons, issued a statement on solitary calling for a 15-day ban on its use. Correctional health professionals should not condone or participate in cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment of adults or juveniles in custody, the statement also notes.

Aviva Stahl is a Brooklyn-based reporter who writes about science/health at the intersection of mass incarceration, national security, and trans rights. Shes written for the New York Times, Wired, BuzzFeed News, Solitary Watch, and other outlets. Find her [@stahlidarity](#) and at [stahlidarity.com](#).

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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