

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Aviva Stahl](#) | May 28, 2017

Social entrepreneur Marcus Bullock and writer Dwayne Betts, who both spent time in solitary confinement as kids, wrote about their experiences for [The Hill](#). The hole became a rite of passage. A cauldron meant to destroy. And of course, the loneliness that seeps into your bones does not leave regardless of what follows.

Another federal lawsuit has been filed against the Lincoln Hills School for Boys and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, alleging that a 17-year-old boy was body slammed, pepper sprayed and kept in solitary confinement for weeks. The conditions of solitary confinement were unbearable and demoralizing, states the lawsuit, [according to the La Crosse Tribune](#). (The former inmate) was given a small bed with one cover. The cell smelled like sweat, urine and feces, and there was no toilet. Inexplicably, the guards routinely ignored (the former inmates) requests for bathroom access, forcing him to urinate and defecate in his own cell.

Minnesota failed to pass legislation that would have limited the length of time people could be placed in solitary confinement, banned the placement of people with mental illness in the box and required data collection on the use of isolation. According to [the Star Tribune](#), Rep. Nick Zerwas, R-Elk River, who carried the bill, blamed Gov. Mark Dayton and the Department of Corrections for the late collapse of a last-ditch deal.

Inmates at California's second-oldest prison, Folsom State Prison, began a hunger strike Thursday to protest extreme disciplinary measures, abuse, and human rights violations in solitary confinement chambers where prisoners are forced to eke out their time in small dungeon-like chambers, reported [TeleSur](#). In 2013, tens of thousands of people locked up in California went on a hunger strike to demand reforms to the use of solitary confinement.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigations is currently investigating the death of a 52-year-old man who was found dead in his solitary confinement cell in early May. Ross Chad Oldham is the third person to die while in custody inside the Sumner County Jail in the past nine months, a [local outlet reported](#).

The American Civil Liberties Union [announced](#) that it has filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security in an effort to expose the treatment of hunger strikers in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facilities, including by placing hunger strikers in solitary confinement. Meanwhile, human rights organizations are [campaigning for the closure](#) of two immigration detention centers in Georgia, where detainees have recently died while being held in isolation.

New York City [renamed one of its streets](#) after Kalief Browder, on what would have been his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday. Browder spent three years at Rikers Island after being arrested on suspicion of stealing a backpack, during which he spent over a year in isolation. He committed suicide in 2015.

Political prisoner Jaan K. Laaman has been in solitary confinement since late March, in what supporters say is punishment for exercising his First Amendment rights. Laaman [is said to have been placed in the box](#) after expressing support for the International Womens Strike on March 8 and for writing a statement mourning the death of civil rights attorney Lynne Stewart.

More than 1,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails ended a mass hunger strike against detention conditions, [according to the BBC](#) and other sources. The strike was called to protest against solitary confinement and other conditions of confinement endured by Palestinians behind bars.

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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