

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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by [Jean Casella and James Ridgeway](#) | July 12, 2010

Get ready. We are likely to hear more from the press about solitary confinement in the next month than we have in the last year. That's because when Lindsay Lohan surrenders herself for her 90-day prison term, she reportedly will be housed in isolation in Lynwood, California's [Century Regional Detention Facility](#) (CRDF).

[Gawker says](#) that Lohan will be kept away from the general population in a version of solitary confinement that is specially designed for famous people and other special inmates. [Inside Edition also reported](#) that because Lohan is a celebrity, she's a target in jail. So, she will be kept essentially in solitary confinement. This same kind of protective isolation was given to former CRDF inmates Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie and presumably Lohan herself, when she served an 84-minute term there for DUI in 2007.

Though we wouldn't wish 90 days in solitary on anyone, our point here is not to convince readers to feel sorry for Lindsay Lohan. The fact is, Lohan's future conditions of confinement highlight a widespread issue with what's termed protective custody.

On any given day, thousands of inmates across America are in solitary confinement not because of any perceived disciplinary infraction, but rather for their own protection. Prisoners are placed in protective isolation because they are targets for violence or sexual assault; because they are mentally ill or suicidal; because they are lesbian, gay, or transgender; and because they are children in other words, by no fault of their own.

Many of these inmates have already been victimized in prison, and by placing them in solitary, the prison system victimizes them for a second time. Conditions in protective isolation are, in most cases, exactly the same as those in disciplinary or administrative segregation. In order to be protected, these prisoners are usually placed in the same small, often windowless cells that are used for punishment; they remain there for 23 hours a day or more, with brief respites for a shower or some solitary exercise in an empty cage. Like other prisoners in solitary, they are usually denied any opportunities for work, recreation, education, and sometimes even drug treatment or counseling.

Lindsay Lohan's experience will no doubt be less harsh than that of most prisoners in protective isolation. Still, as [Fox News reports](#), it is expected that Lohan will be placed in solitary confinement and granted limited contact with other inmates, as well as the privilege of stepping out into the sunshine for a small amount of time each day. She will be allowed only to see her family on two scheduled days per week.

Lohan's sentencing was [enough to get her tweeting](#) about international human rights protocols: It is clearly stated in Article 5 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights that 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,' read her Twitter feed. Maybe her jail time will turn her into a dubious spokesperson against solitary confinement. Stranger things have happened.

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James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

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i do hope she becomes a speaker to end solitary after all this not that i like her just her influences may be powerful to the fight,

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