

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](#) | June 25, 2021

According to a [press release published in the *Beachwood Reporter*](#), a judge certified a class action lawsuit against the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) earlier this month. The more than 28,000 people represented by the [Uptown Peoples Law Center](#) filed the lawsuit to seek a court order that will limit IDOC's ability to use solitary confinement. Among others, they are accusing IDOC of using solitary as punishment for minor infractions, and of placing people in solitary for disproportionately long stays. The U.N. states that over 15 days of solitary is torture, yet sometimes people in Illinois spend decades there, said attorney Alan Mills in a statement. And everyone who spends more than a couple of weeks ends up traumatized.

The human body is not meant to live in a parking space; the human body is meant to move: In this short [audio piece by NPR](#), solitary survivor and activist Candie Hailey and organizer Scott Paltrowitz discuss what solitary confinement is like, how it harms people even after they are released from solitary, and what is being done to challenge the use of solitary around the country.

In a second piece, [NPR examines](#) horrific conditions in America's tribal jails. Carlos Yazzie (44), for example, was arrested and placed in an isolation cell in 2017, even though he needed medical attention. His blood alcohol content was almost six times the legal limit, but the officers at the jail determined that he was fine. They left Yazzie unmonitored for hours until they found him dead in his cell the next morning. He had died from alcohol poisoning a death that could have been avoided with proper medical attention. Yazzie is one of many people who have greatly suffered and even died in tribal detention centers in the U.S. Although officials had promised reforms years ago, NPR discovered a pattern of negligence throughout the tribal jail system.

[Fox47 reported](#) on a Michigan campaign organized by Citizens for Prison Reform that aims to end the use of solitary confinement in the state. Representatives from the campaign criticized that Michigan has no limit of how long someone can be held in solitary, and that a high proportion of the people in solitary suffer from mental health illnesses. We discovered that over 50 percent of people being serviced by us that had been released from the Michigan Department of Corrections had diagnosed mental health issues, said organizing consultant Kord Brown in an interview with Fox47. Nearly all of them had experienced segregation.

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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