

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/07/22/as-prisoners-end-hunger-strike-at-pelican-bay-their-cause-continues/>

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | July 22, 2011

Reports from [California Prison Focus](#), among other groups supporting prisoners on hunger strike in Pelican Bay State Prisons Security Housing Unit (SHU), confirm that the strikers last night agreed to begin eating. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation reportedly made small concessions having to do with prisoners possessions and educational programming, and also promised a comprehensive review of policies regarding gang management and secured housing.

As [California Watch points out](#), a previous department study that proposed overhauling gang policies and reducing the length of time inmates spend in Security Housing Units was mothballed, as were similar promises made following a [2001 hunger strike](#) at Pelican Bay. According to [The Dissenter](#), groups supporting the hunger strikers say that press coverage and public support prevented prisoners from being retaliated against during the strike. They are urging the public and the media to continue monitoring progress toward the strikers demands. Solitary Watch will continue to provide updates as information emerges.

The Pelican Bay hunger strike has been one of the most significant prisoner actions of recent decades. Solitary Watch volunteer reporter/researcher Sal Rodriguez has completed a Fact Sheet that includes background on Pelican Bay State Prison, conditions in the SHU, criteria for placement in the SHU, prisoner demands, the progress of the hunger strike, the state response, background on the landmark case *Madrid v. Gomez*, and more:

[FACT SHEET Hunger Strike at Pelican Bay State Prison](#)



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James Ridgeway and Jean Casella

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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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.

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by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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I agree with markhalfmoon my husband is in there and just for the record bill they claim they have medical on demand but sometimes they have to wait awhile until anyone address the issue and food is barely enough and its cold i understand they put themselves in that situation but its different feeling when one of your loved ones is in there.

about time the light shine on them no one should have to go thow what they do in the shu i tell you it just such a dishonore to this nashion that we use solitary like this sad thing is we even use it in schools just call it by difrent name just cos you call it suclueshion dose not mean it is not a form of solitary i would know first hand dam well dose same thing long term solitary will do to you i hope they honore thare end of the deal that state is knowen for over use of solitary big time may thare be light in the darknes of justice

I am grateful for all those who are dedicated to bringing an end to the use of long term isolation in our nations prisons and I am especially grateful for all those who have prayed and worked to have the voices of these inmates heard. The question Americas justice system needs to ask itself How does it help, to take a mans hope hope away?

Are you speaking from personal experience bill? Or are you one of those people who think Auschwitz was a luxury vacation resort?

there is a lot of misinformation being spread about the conditions inside prisons. The truth is prisoners eat better and have better medical than 90% of the world. Do you have your meals prepared with the aid of a dietician? Do you have nurses standing by 24/7 for you if anything goes wrong? Do you have a psychologist coming by your house every week to see how you are? Can you afford to go to the DR or dentist for ANY little problem? Do you have guards standing by to keep you safe at all times (even if it is from yourself)? The things I describe are usually reserved for millionaires and up.. oh yeah and prisoners. Imagine never having to work a day in your life again. Imagine meals brought to your door. Homeless people on the streets would commit crimes just to go to prison if they knew how good it is. Words like inhumane, torture, gulag, barbaric, etc.. are absolutely false when used to describe prison life. There is no such thing as solitary confinement in the SHU. Prisoners are master manipulators, and this is what it comes down to: inmates spreading false information that gullible people believe, PERIOD. There is no torture, no inhumane conditions, no solitary confinement. WAKE UP PEOPLE! oh yeah, one more thing, the cells are NOT soundproof.

FINALLY!! A group of people with some guts!! This strike, though risky and heartbreaking, takes us back to the 60s & 70s when PEOPLE mattered and did something!! It has hopefully opened the lines of real communication between CDCR and the inmates. Solitary Confinement is definately cruel and unusual punishment, even for short periods of time.

The U.S. needs to look at other countries whos crime stats are lower and whose prisons find better, more humane methods of treating prisoners. Our country has become desensitized to punishing people for all kinds of crimes, sentencing for too long in cases that dont deserve such extended periods of incarceration. When every little move-ment or mistake is considered a serious violation and punished as such, men and women dont learn anything except resentment.

P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

Solitary Watch

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