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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](#) | December 11, 2016

Federal appellate judges decided a lawsuit [can proceed](#) against officials at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, after correctional officers allegedly forced a prisoner to live in a solitary confinement cell flooded with raw sewage. Raul Arellano filed the lawsuit in October 2014, claiming that what occurred violated his Eighth Amendment rights against cruel and unusual punishment.

Delaware has disbanded the states death row and moved former residents into other housing. [According to the AP](#), Prison officials say the move, which occurred in August, resulted in former death row inmates having five times more recreational time than they had before, and in some cases, sharing cells with other inmates who are not facing the death penalty.

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie [vetoed a bill](#) that would have limited the states use of solitary confinement. Had the bill become law, it would have barred prison authorities from putting vulnerable people (including pregnant women, seniors, LGBTQ people, and those with mental illness) in solitary, and prohibited the use of isolation for longer than 15 consecutive days.

A Rhode Island special legislative commission [heard testimony from people](#) who had spent time in solitary confinement in the state as well as those who were currently in isolation. I think solitary confinement is mental torture, said one solitary survivor, Elton Simpson.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Washington is suing Grays Harbor County to obtain records related to its juvenile detention facility, which the ACLU needs in order to investigate whether constitutional violations have taken place. The lawsuit, filed in Thurston County Superior Court, says the county has unreasonably dragged its feet in producing the records, [reported](#) a local outlet.

[The Star Tribune](#) continued its coverage of solitary confinement in Minnesotas prisons, publishing a diary of a person who spent a year in the hole. Meanwhile, the Governor and several Republican legislators are said to be [expressing concerns](#) about the extent to which state officials are relying on isolation to punish people on the inside.

Over a dozen groups have [submitted a letter](#) asking President Obama to pardon whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who is currently serving 35 years in military prison. Manning recently tried to commit suicide, including once when she was in solitary confinement, and her lawyers say she has yet to receive the necessary treatment for her gender dysphoria.

The Bureau of Prisons has reached a settlement in a lawsuit that pertains to the treatment of people with mental illness at supermax Florence ADX, reported [the Marshall Project](#). The judge is expected to give his final approval to the deal at a hearing in Denver later this month and if he does it will represent one of the most significant victories in the history of litigation against the Bureau of Prisons, writes Andrew Cohen.

Idaho Department of Correction Director (IDOC) Kevin Kempf has announced he [will be leaving his post](#) and taking up the position of executive director at the Association of State Correctional Administrators. During his time at the IDOC, Kempf oversaw significant reforms, including reducing the use of solitary confinement.

At [the Atlantic](#), journalist Juleyka Lantigua-Williams explored the link between race and solitary confinement. Stark disparities in prisoners treatment are embedded into criminal-justice systems at the city, county, state, and federal levels, and have disproportionate, negative effects on men of color. In New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo has asked the state inspector to [investigate allegations of racial bias](#) in the prison system, following the publication of two in-depth articles in the New York Times.

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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An example for everyone to think on..an interview with a man who had spent 22 years on death row has recently been able to air because he was proved innocent.

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