

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/02/17/conflicting-reports-on-hunger-strike-at-californias-corcoran-state-prison/>

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | February 17, 2012

A week after Solitary Watch first reported the death of 27-year-old hunger striker [Christian Gomez](#), information about the recent strike in the Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU) at Corcoran State Prison remains hard to come by.

Officially, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has given varying accounts about the hunger strike. CDCR Spokesperson Terry Thornton, in an email to Solitary Watch, stated that the hunger strike officially began on January 27 and that on Thursday, February 9, all inmates in the ASU except one resumed eating state-issued food. This was followed up by Nancy Kincaid, Director of Communications with California Correctional Health Care Services, who stated to Solitary Watch that all accepted food trays last Thursday [February 9].

This information has been contradicted by a relative of one hunger striker, who told Solitary Watch that the strike was still ongoing on February 10th, when at least two inmates fainted and had to receive medical attention. Medical problems seemed to have plagued many strikers, as noted in [a letter to activist Kendra Castaneda](#) dated February 5, in which one of the strikers writes that inmates are passing out and having other medical problems and it seems that this is not being taken seriously. The relative reported that the striker appeared to have lost a significant amount of weight during a recent visit, and that he had been very dizzy during the visit.

The striker, who had only recently been placed in the ASU for an indeterminate amount of time, reportedly knew Christian Gomez and described the day of his death. He told his relative that several inmates were screaming and pounding their fists on their cell doors trying to get the attention of the correctional officers. His knuckles were noticeably battered during the visit. CDCR officials [continue to assert](#) that autopsy results show Gomez did not die of starvation, although the cause of death has not been made public.

Affirming the statements of one of the December ASU strike petitioners, who asserted that the strike has no ending date unless some or all demands are met, the striker hinted that there will be future strikes if the CDCR doesn't reform conditions in the ASU at Corcoran. It is currently unclear why the hunger strike ended when it did. A January 31st letter from one of the petitioners indicated that prison officials may have entered into talks with the strikers, but this remains unconfirmed.

Currently, there are over 350 inmates in the ASU at Corcoran. According to a 2009 Office of the Inspector General [report](#), there are over 8,000 administrative segregation beds in CA. The report examined a number of ASUs, not including Corcoran, but indicated that several ASUs involved unjustifiably delayed classification hearings, holding inmates with expired SHU terms, and transfer delays. Such issues were noted by the [Corcoran petition](#) in December. The prisoners third demand is That inmates not be further punished upon completion of their SHU terms, and reads in part:

Inmates are being placed in the ASU after the completion of their SHU terms supposedly pending transfer. These inmates are then stuck here for four, five months, in many instances even longer, before finally being transferred to general population. This practice of illegally placing inmates in ASU upon the completion of their SHU terms for long periods of time without proper procedure and with excessive delays on their transfers is resulting in unjustified punishment for these inmates.

Furthermore, inmates undergoing the DRB (Departmental Review Board) process after the completion of their SHU terms are being held in ASU for months and even years while the counselors and committee ignore their repeated requests for a timely hearing on their case. This is in blatant violation of their procedural due process rights.

Time will tell whether or not reform of such practices comes at Corcoran any time soon. However, [KALW News reported](#) on February 15 that Thornton said revisions to its policies regarding security threat group management and changes to the gang validation process is nearly complete. [She] anticipates the revision will go out for legislators and inmate advocacy groups to review near the end of this month.

For more on the potential reforms, read this January [Solitary Watch](#) post on the matter. Solitary Watch will continue to publish updates on the Corcoran hunger strike as information becomes available.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for

the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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they absolutely need outside legal representation clarifying and uncovering any discrepancies

As long as the CDCR is allowed to investigate or gather information, reports or statements there will always be discrepancies and the truth never makes it to the top with their existing policy of transparency or should I say lack of transparency. One should petition for an independent legislative inquiry to find the truth ~~

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