

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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close

Search

close

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Our Weekly Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Valerie Kiebala](#) | December 17, 2017

[According](#) to *The New York Times*, a federal magistrate judge approved a class-action settlement this week, in which the City of New York agreed to pay \$5 million in reparations to those who were subjected to solitary confinement at Rikers Island jail under the old time policy, which mandated placement in solitary upon return to the facility for any individual who had served time in solitary at Rikers prior to their release. While the city discontinued the policy in 2015, the lawsuit claims that the due process rights of 470 individual were violated during the three-year period before it ended. While Rikers still uses solitary confinement, a spokesperson for the city's Law Department claimed an 85 percent reduction over the past four years in the number of people held in solitary.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released a [report](#) this week after conducting unannounced inspections at five Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities, finding significant issues in four of the facilities that undermine the protection of detainees rights, their humane treatment, and the provision of a safe and healthy environment. The report concluded that Otero County Processing Center in New Mexico, Stewart Detention Center in Georgia, and Santa Ana City Jail in California violated ICE standards in the administration, justification, and documentation of segregation, often failing to communicate individuals rights or the reasoning behind their placement in solitary. OIG recommended the development of a review process for ICE facilities as well as corrective action for deficiencies.

In an [article](#) published in *The Guardian*, Khalid Qassim, who has been held at Guantanamo Bay for 16 years without trial, described his recent experience on hunger strike. According to Qassim, while staff at Guantanamo previously force fed hunger strikers, the current practice entails denying the hunger strikers essential medical care and placing them in solitary confinement. Qassim recalled, Theyve recently told me: If you lose some of your organs, it is your choice. Qassim writes that he is currently being held in solitary without medical care, despite severe health complications that have caused him to lose consciousness twice since the beginning of the hunger strike.

This week, the King County Council in Seattle, Washington, voted unanimously to ban the use of solitary confinement for juveniles, months after the families of four children filed a lawsuit against the county for holding the children in solitary for days at a time, [according](#) to *Komo News*. The ordinance, which prohibits solitary confinement for juveniles, except in cases deemed necessary for security or safety, could go into effect between now and the first of July, if approved by County Executive Dow Constantine.

The Correctional Association of New York (CA) released a [report](#) last week documenting the reality of solitary confinement at the super-maximum security Southport Correctional Facility in Pine City, New York, where about 400 people are currently held in isolation. Based on extensive research and interviews, the CA found devastating psychological effects of solitary confinement, pervasive staff brutality, racism, and abuse, and negligence of mental health services, contributing to the high rate of self-harm. The report, further elaborated in Victoria Laws article [New York Supermax](#), calls for New York State legislators to pass the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, which would limit solitary confinement stays to 15 days and require rehabilitative and therapeutic alternatives to isolation.

Valerie Kiebala was a contributing writer and editorial and project manager for Solitary Watch, and is now the media director of Straight Ahead, which is building a decarceration movement throughout Pennsylvania. Her work has also appeared in *The Root*, *Truthout*, the *Chicago Reporter*, and *Shadowproof*.

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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