

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2014/09/11/from-one-north-carolina-prison-reports-of-an-eight-month-lockdown/>

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by [Lisa Dawson](#) | September 11, 2014

UPDATE (September 18, 2014): Solitary Watch received the following statement via email from North Carolina Department of Public Safety spokesperson Keith Acree:

The evolving lockdown situation at Scotland Correctional Institution has affected about 600 inmates in close custody regular population housing. The medium custody (~540) and minimum custody (~240) populations have not been affected nor have those on control status (~230). The entire prison population today is 1,663.

We implement lockdowns when needed to ensure the safety of inmates and staff and to prevent injuries. The December lockdown was prompted by a series of fights between large groups of inmates at Scotland that resulted in injuries to inmates and staff. Since the beginning of 2014, the institution has recorded 61 actual or attempted assaults on staff and 20 actual or attempted inmate on inmate assaults.

At this point, the lockdown for close custody regular population (RPOP) has stepped down to a point that we call managed observation. Close custody RPOP inmates are now allowed about 4 hours of out-of-cell time daily (compared to about 8 hours before the Dec. 28 fights that began the lockdown).

Visiting, outdoor recreation, telephone use and canteen privileges have resumed. Vocational and educational programs are in session and the prisons two Correction Enterprises plants (a sewing plant and the Braille plant) are operating normally. Inmates continue to receive hot meals brought to their cells. All activities are occurring in small groups. Religious services have not yet resumed. A new chaplain began work this week.

Since the lockdown began Dec. 28, restrictions have been lifted in 11 progressive steps, based on inmate behavior and cooperation, to reach the point where we are today.

Katy Poole has been serving as acting administrator at Scotland CI since Aug. 1 when Sorrell Saunders retired.

Across the United States, even prisoners who have not been placed in solitary confinement or any form of segregation can be subjected to a lockdown in which they may be held in solitary-like conditions, confined to their cells nearly round-the-clock. Brief lockdowns are a common occurrence, and lockdowns lasting months or more are not unusual. Individuals subjected to lockdown are generally denied even the pro-forma review processes afforded to most others placed in solitary confinement.

In the Close Custody unit a single celled, high-security unit at North Carolina's Scotland Correctional Institution, nearly 600 men have been on indefinite lockdown since December 28, 2013.

Individuals subjected to the lockdown have been confined to their cells for 22 to 23 hours a day for eight months and counting.

When asked by Solitary Watch about the status of Scotland, North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NC DPS) spokesperson Keith Acree stated that he was unaware that the prison was on lockdown.

In January of this year, the [Laurinburg Exchange](#) reported on the lockdown:

According to Keith Acree, spokesperson for the state department, the institutions closed custody population, which numbers about 800, has been confined to cells since a series of fights between inmates and minor assaults on staff members occurred shortly after Christmas.

Acree said injuries to staff members were nothing serious, but that several were hit or bumped. . .

A lockdown means prisoners cannot have visitors, make calls, or leave their cells for meals. They cannot visit the canteen, Acree said, but orders from the canteen can be delivered to their cells.

Acree said he could not remember when the last time the institution was on lockdown, but he was not aware of the current lockdown

until he received an inquiry from The Laurinburg Exchange. In 2011, the prison was one of six in the state placed on lockdown after a surge of gang violence.

About a dozen people from Scotlands Close Custody population have written to Solitary Watch describing conditions at the prison. Some people wrote to describe the conditions at the prison in general, while others detailed particular incidents.

One man recalls the day the Scotland Correctional Institute was put on lockdown:

On December 28, 2013, two individual fights took place at about 5:35 PM. No one was stabbed or cut, and no staff was hurt. Prison officials labeled the incident a gang fight and shut down the whole facility. For almost a month we were not allowed out of our cells or allowed to take showers. When they did allow us to take showers, we had to do so in cuffs once a week.

Another man wrote to describe the general conditions at the prison since the lockdown has been put in effect:

We don't get but two hours out of our cells a day. In that two hours, 24 people have to use the phone, take showers and get anything done that requires any assistance by the staff because once you're in your cell, it's like you're forgotten. Then you spend 22 hours in this room. . . The things that go on here are uncalled for. This is supposed to be a place of rehabilitation but it does no one any good the way the staff at SCI mistreats people and writes you up for actions you didn't commit. It just sends everyone's minds or actions and feelings back to square one.

The following comes from a man who describes the restrictions at the prison as counterproductive to the point where he's about to lose [his] mind:

This prison has been on 22-hour-a-day lockdown for months. . . When I got here, I wanted a chance to earn my GED, but this prison is not helping me to better myself in any way. I have not been able to eat hot meals or go outside for fresh air ever in months. The treatment here is cruel and unusual and I'm about to lose my mind behind these doors.

Another member of the Close Custody population elaborates on the varying levels of restrictions seen since the lockdown began:

While on lockdown, we've been through different stages. Stage one, we were on lockdown for 24 a day hours without being allowed to shower. It was like this for a month. Then the officers started taking us to the shower one day out of the week with handcuffs on so tight that it made it difficult for us to wash. Stage two, they let 12 of us out of our cells to rec in the dayroom for one hour. Next, they let 24 of us out for two hours. We haven't had any outside rec since December 28, 2013, and our skin and health is showing that.

Another man writes to convey the intrusiveness of his confinement, portraying how little privacy he was given, even while showering:

The first month there was no recreation. Everyone was confined to their cells for 24 hours a day. There were no showers. When they started allowing showers, you had to go in full restraints with two officers standing at the shower watching with sticks out. . .

No visitors have been allowed for the past three months, nor are we provided with any religious services. . .

Since we have been on lockdown, we have been having trouble with the officers doing their jobs. If we ask them for writing paper, envelopes or request forms, they will not bring it, especially if we're housed on the upper tier. One inmate asked an officer for some toilet paper. She said, I'm not walking upstairs to give you any toilet paper. You better use a shirt, and left the block.

He also describes an instance when another prisoner had fallen in his cell and his pleas for help were ignored by staff:

The major problem we have is that officers do not respond when we hit out call buttons. . . Nobody ever comes to see what we want until we start kicking on the cell doors. There were several incidents where an inmate was feeling dizzy and pushing his cell button every couple of minutes. Nobody came. He passed out and we had to kick on the doors for about 20 minutes before anyone came.

Another member from the Close Custody population describes a similar incident:

An inmate's back gave out on him and he fell to the floor. He started banging on the door with his brush for 15 minutes but no one came to check on him. So we started kicking on the doors, and kicked for almost an hour before an officer came. She looked in his cell and started laughing at him. She left and came back with another officer. She looked in at him again and laughed. They both left and came back with a sergeant, who looked at the inmate and said, Why don't you just do us all a favor and die. Then the sergeant called nurse and they came and took him to Medical after he'd laid on the floor for about an hour and 10 minutes. . .

We've been asking why they are punishing 600 inmates for something four people were involved in. Those inmates were put in segregation, found guilty of their charges and punished for them. But so are we.

One man discusses a health condition with which he's been diagnosed, yet is not being treated for:

Recently I was diagnosed with high blood pressure. For the last two and half weeks, my blood pressure hasn't been checked and I haven't received my medication to treat it.

Another man writes of problems he has had sending and receiving mail:

Due to the lockdown, I wrote a grievance to the North Carolina Department of Public Safety and mailed it to them on 2/20/14, so I thought. . . But it was opened, taken out of the stamped envelope and signed by the unit manager and the screening officer and returned to me almost a month later. Before my grievance was returned, my mail started coming in late after mail had already been passed out and sometimes not until the next morning. Then I would either not receive mail or it would come looking like it'd been deliberately cut up. . .

He closes his letter:

I have not seen my family since my trial ended and I would love to see them. . . No religious services, no visits, no type of outside activity, no books from the library, no school all this, for no reason. . . I, along with other inmates, are being punished for no reason at all. I have not caused any trouble and do not deserve this cruel and unusual punishment, which is a violation of my Eighth Amendment rights.

Another prisoner describes the disturbing situation, emphasizing that the deprivations faced by these men are unwarranted:

To think violence or disrespect is right? That is exactly what they're doing to us: Disrespecting us and violating us as human beings. We don't get to stretch our muscles, we don't get any sunlight. . . We are treated like M-con status inmates, and we haven't done anything to deserve it. . . They tell our families that they are understaffed, but that isn't our problem. We are imprisoned inside a prison. . . We have been on lockdown since December 28, 2013, and enough is enough.

Since these letters were written to Solitary Watch, Scotland Correctional Institution has modified the conditions of confinement in Close Custody. According to people held at the prison, the men are now allowed out of their cells twice a day for approximately for two hours and allowed outside for recreation for one hour twice a week. However, they have not resumed hot meals or any religious services for people held in the unit.

Lisa Dawson served as an assistant editor, social media manager, and contributor at Solitary Watch. She continues to support prisoners and their family members who need help navigating re-entry. She is on Twitter [@endsolitary](#).

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

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Anyone who believes that these inmates are being mistreated is as dumb as they are. They lie constantly. If you have a hug-a-thug mentality, get a job in corrections and see for yourself. There are procedures for inmates to use if they have a complaint and all are investigated. You don't want to be on lockdown, don't come to prison. Simple as that.

Keep in mind, you are defending rapists and murderers. From your perspective, he is a friend to you. Sometimes the victim doesn't get an opportunity to have a perspective..

You're incorrect. Not all prisoners lie. Many grievances filed by prisoners are either thrown in the trash by a C/O as they leave the pod or other obstacles are instituted to prevent the prisoner from even writing the grievance.

I'm sorry but not all inmates lie. I have been in a relationship with an inmate at the Scotland correctional institute and I receive letters from him begging for help. He has been denied hot meals showers fresh air and so much more including phone calls home. His father is sick and needs a kidney even though he is a perfect match and wants to help his father live longer they deny him to do it. When he was able to call home they cut his calls off 5 min into the call with his mother. He hurt his ankle and put in a medical slip and waited months to get a response back and that was over a year ago and still has heard nothing. I had written him a letter just last month and it was returned to me saying inmate to inmate is not allowed but yet I am NOT an inmate and never have been. I could only imagine what else the inmates have been through. This kinda stuff is uncalled for and should be taken care of

Hi Jennie: You're right. Not all prisoners lie.

I'm so sorry your friend is having this trouble. Getting phone calls cut off, denying him medical care and rejecting his mail are common everyday abuses prisoners deal with everyday. I've been helping (volunteer) the incarcerated mentally ill for 15 years and have witnessed this abuse. A friend of mine killed himself in October. The prison cruelly rejected my last letter to him for an other reason. It was so obvious this was abuse that I immediately called the prison. Told them my friend was suicidal and he desperately needed to get this letter. He killed himself 3 days later. Never before had this prison rejected my mail. Anyway, again, sorry you guys are having this cruelty inflicted on you. And, I validate and believe everything you have reported.

Erika

They are still being kept inside. No outside recreation. They are treated worse than animals at Scotland! The food is unhealthy and most are suffering from a Vitamin D deficiency.

Hello Starr, I'd like to help. What would you like me to do? We need to aggressively speak up. This treatment is unacceptable.

This practice of long lockdowns is happening at Estelle unit, Huntsville Texas, a list of rules issued by staff, any violation, by anyone, rules start the lockdown over. a round robin situation, no commissary allowed, inmates run out of all personal items, water off in cells for days. a hot meal is unheard of, this inf.. comes to me from my son, please pray for him and the others. a sad mom

Im so sorry to hear this. I know its very sad for you that your son is suffering like this. Id be happy to write your son if he needs a friend.

I wonder just how many inmates have died in Scotland Ci, since Gary N. Bell, at the hands of a man well known for gang activity, even before he murdered Gary in 2008, even looking at Edward Wileys offender info, he had infractions,
<http://webapps6.doc.state.nc.us/opi/viewoffender.do?method=view&offenderID=0773417&SENTENCEINFO=yes&SHOWPHOTO=yes&numtimesin=2>

09/16/2013 MISUSE/UNAUTH-USE PHONE/MAIL
09/16/2013 INVOLVEMENT W/GANG OR STG
10/12/2010 LOCK TAMPERING
10/11/2010 DISOBEY ORDER
10/11/2010 LOCK TAMPERING
02/05/2008 INVOLVEMENT W/GANG OR STG
02/05/2008 ASSAULT PERSON W/WEAPON
05/30/2007 SUBSTANCE POSSESSION
12/05/2006 PROVOKE ASSAULT
12/13/2005 UNAUTHORIZED LOCATION
12/13/2005 ASSAULT PERSON W/WEAPON
09/21/2005 FIGHTING
09/21/2005 INVOLVEMENT W/GANG OR STG
08/09/2005 SUBSTANCE POSSESSION
07/31/2005 DISOBEY ORDER

now he is in Alexander CI , and still getting in trouble, this is the type of inmate the State should look into adding to the death row, inmates like him cost the State billions of dollars and never get reformed, WOULD you consider putting him back out on the streets to gang war where your children live? If he is brave enough to stab a man to death with a piece of barb wire,(repeatedly stab) inside a prison, It truly scares me what this less than an animal will do on the outside! And folks this is just one example from one of the thousands, perhaps millions of inmates that just needs to be done something , other with besides locked up, these are the ones who need to be eliminated, repeat violent activity against other living beings after being incarcerated must STOP at the cost of that offender/inmate and not the tax payers.

<http://mylifeofcrime.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/gary-n-bell-murder-2508-laurinburg-nc-stabbed-to-death-by-another-inmate-edward-wiley/>

GANG VIOLENCE in the prisons is very real, there are wanna-be-res, followers, leaders, ...!

Malcolm, I feel I now owe you a response. There is little known about the internal workings of a prison from those on the outside. The inmates are not normally locked down for a majority of the day, well not those in regular population as discussed in this article. However, due to safety and security concerns, the facility did implement lockdown procedures. There are certain steps and requirements before going back to normal operations. Almost everything a prison does is in response to the inmate population and is always in the best interests concerning safety and security.

I agree that total solitary confinement is not beneficial to rehabilitation or in progressing an inmate for release, however, inmates do have too many freedoms at times. there have to be limits and inmates need to learn to earn freedoms and less restrictions. Unfortunately, close custody is better living than medium custody. That is a problem.

What is not being discussed in this article is the actions of the inmates once they are removed from their cells. If the population doesnt behave, then why give them more freedoms? The facility is currently going through changes, ie Administrator and with this change, there will be reviews of the policies and some possible changes. The administrator is responsible for the safety of both staff and inmates. When one is attacked because the inmates were not locked down, guess who they look to! It is a difficult job, and one where decisions can not come lightly.

Finally, please remember that most of the information in the article is from inmates. Inmates truly do lie to receive pity or attention will do anything for a possible lawsuit. Policies are not perfect, but you have to do what you have to do to preserve order. Do not believe everything you read in the article.

Thank you Steve for your candid and insightful remarks and no, I wont be quiet as you suggest. Nothing will change if we do that. I am not naive enough to think that their arent many people with harmful intentions behind bars and that the job of prison staff is without constant dangers. I do not envy you your job. However I do believe that the policy of long term solitary confinement is part of the problem and not part of the solution. Society at large pays a very large price for this policy, since we either keep prisoners behind bars at huge expense until they die at or we release them with an enlarged chip on their shoulders. Changes must be made and that will happen only if we pressure government and prison authorities to create and fund a better way of doing things. Other countries manage it so why cant the US? Please help us do that.

It is obvious that no one who is reading or commenting has any clue to the truth of what is happening at Scotland Correctional. Being a correctional officer is a low paying job considering the job that is done. Staff are expected to walk amongst 100 or more murders, rapist, etc. and do it with just one other officer. Staffs only defense is pepper spray, their own hands and a radio. The prisons are filled with gang members who are always trying to recruit new members and hits on staff part of initiations. All prisons in NC are understaffed and under paid. The state is always worried about paying teachers more but cut positions from prisons. Less staff equals less control. With these types of working conditions, it is hard to find good, hard working people to attempt to control these inmates. Staff who properly do

their jobs have to consistently worry about being attacked as a result of removing contraband to include cell phones. Inmates in close custody status should not have the freedoms that they have. Scotland Correctional is going through changes and is going through the lock down step down procedures. When it is found that inmates will remain in good behavior, they will have less restrictions. They have to earn it. You also have to remember, that these letters from inmates are just that. Letters from inmates. Inmates don't do anything as much as they lie. Most inmates are always looking for a lawsuit and anyway to get money from the state. There are occasions where staff do no wrong, and inmates still attempt to sue. I can agree that not all staff are perfect, but inmates are far from perfect.

If you are responding to this article, and you feel the inmates are sooooo mistreated, by all means, apply for a job there and do something about it. Until then, be quiet and let the system do its job to keep you protected from the savages, murderers, rapists, etc, that are kept behind bars, and forgotten by the public.

I recently lost a friend in prison to suicide. He was driven to it because the guards constantly harassed and abused him. He was mentally ill. Like many mentally ill prisoners, the guards encouraged him to commit suicide on a daily basis. I could never work in a prison because I don't have the sadistic personality that is required to be a prison guard.

An extended lockdown for an incident occurring almost a year before, such as described here, is indicative of a prison system that cares nothing about rehabilitation, but is motivated by money only and has staff that are too lazy to do the jobs their state is paying them to do. There is no other excuse for this excessive punitive treatment of prisoners without cause.

Its been over 2 years now

It appears that the warden and prison staff at the Scotland Correctional Institution in North Carolina is exhibiting a sociopathic lack of imagination and their policy in this instance is turning a bad situation into a disaster. Society will pay a high price for this policy and it therefore behooves society to remove them from this kind of work and find people who can turn the situation around.

Excellent comment. I completely agree with you. Society pays for the cruelty of the American prison system.

They don't even follow their own policies and procedures. You can find the policy and procedure manual on the Internet

These conditions at Scotland Correctional Institution are horrendous. Its a constitutional violation to subject prisoners to these conditions without due process.

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