

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/1232-national-faith-group-condemns-500-percent-increase-in-solitary-confinement>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2020

CONTACT: T.C. Morrow, 202-547-1920 or tmorrow@nrcat.org

National Faith Group Condemns 500% Increase in Solitary Confinement

WASHINGTON, DC In response to a new [Unlock the Box Report, *Solitary is Never the Answer*](#), which finds an almost 500% increase in the numbers of incarcerated people nationwide facing solitary confinement as a result of responses by Departments of Corrections to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, said this:

The findings in this new report are deeply alarming to people of faith who have long been committed to ending the torture of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons, jails and detention centers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, corrections departments must distinguish humane medical isolation, which is accompanied by adequate protection and mass testing, from the torture of solitary confinement, and institute practices that guard the health of incarcerated people and staff. In addition, the federal Bureau of Prisons placement of all BOP facilities under total lockdown in response to on-going protests for racial justice in our communities, despite a lack of unrest within the prisons, is unconscionable. System-wide solitary confinement and denial of communications with loved ones should never be a response to protests for racial justice.

Such dramatic increases in the use of solitary confinement are immoral, impede years of advocacy for reform, and are a threat to public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, they are out of step with best practices identified by leading voices in the field of corrections including the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA).

Mr. Johnny Perez, Director of the U.S. Prisons Program of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and a survivor of three years in solitary confinement, said this in response to the report:

This report reveals a harrowing truth: that punishment, in the form of solitary confinement, is being used as a default policy when it should be a measure of last resort. The systemic use of punishment in the form of solitary confinement in response to the global public health crisis of the pandemic has allowed corrections systems to further harm the very people they are responsible for protecting.

Facilities built for punitive isolation are being used to confine those who have tested positive for the coronavirus. Imagine having a headache or fever and then being placed in a closet for reporting your symptoms. That is the reality our incarcerated neighbors are facing, and even more so at a time when the nation has come to its knees in recognition of state sponsored violence against black and brown people of color. People need care and not punishment, compassion not retribution, and second chances not death sentences.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 300 religious organizations have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

NRCAT.org [@NRCATtweets](https://twitter.com/NRCATtweets) facebook.com/nrcat

###

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

PO Box 91820

Washington, DC 20090

(t) 202.547.1920

(f) 202.547.1921