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Two Weeks Worth of Our Roundup of News and Views on Solitary Confinement

by [Katie Rose Quandt](#) | April 10, 2016

The *Portland Press Herald* reports that a [former Rhode Island prison warden](#) is speaking out against the use of solitary confinement. Roberta Richman, who worked for the state Department of Corrections for 33 years, supports a bill that would prohibit isolation longer than 15 days. Too many inmates come out of isolation angrier and more dangerous than they were when they went in, she told the RI House Judiciary Committee.

The ACLU [announced the passage](#) of a bill through the Maryland General Assembly that would require the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to report annually on the use of solitary confinement. A 2010 study found that Maryland isolates prisoners at twice the national rate and the numbers are particularly high for inmates with mental illnesses. Transparency is the first step toward accountability and reform, said Delegate Trent Kittleman.

The *Las Vegas Review Journal* reports that a Nevada inmate [reached a \\$60,000 settlement](#) for the unbearable pain he suffered when denied medical treatment while in solitary confinement. Michael Sanzo removed his own teeth when his requests for dental help were ignored.

Severe lack of solitary confinement data is not a problem unique to the United States. Six months after the *Globe and Mail* asked Canada's 13 provincial and territorial prison systems for isolation statistics, [the paper reports](#): Alberta said, We're still looking into the stats. New Brunswick had a similar answer. Only Quebec was able to fully comply with the request.

Some [doctors are calling on U.S. states](#) to ban solitary confinement for children, *Reuters* reports. Isolation can have the same damaging consequences on children as it does on adults. As one doctor explained, Put bluntly, they experience a sense of hopelessness and complete vulnerability, and a lack of sensory stimulation from the outside world.

In a [Times Union op-ed](#), the bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese of Albany called for an end to inhumane and ineffective punishment, deprivation, and extreme isolation, writing that Catholic teaching compels us to support public policies that address the root causes of harm and promote restorative justice.

The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Fox affiliate reports that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is [launching an examination](#) of solitary confinement policies and practices in the state. The DOC will work with researchers from [BetaGov](#) to test possible new policies in controlled, small-sample environments, with the goal of reducing both solitary confinement and prison violence.

The Root spoke with [rapper and solitary confinement activist](#) Chi Ali. Ali, who spent 12 years in prison, called solitary prison on top of prison. He added: You can say it's awful, and it is. Solitary confinement and prison, too, they're awful, but until you experience it, it's only words. On April 12, Ali will participate in a [Hip Hop 4 Human Rights](#) concert/rally in Albany, New York, coinciding with an Advocacy Day for the HALT Solitary Confinement Act sponsored by the New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement.

Katie Rose Quandt is a senior contributing writer/editor at Solitary Watch and freelance journalist based in the Bronx. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, and *Mother Jones*. She is also a senior editor at the Prison Policy Initiative, and was an Alicia Patterson Foundation Fellow and Soros Justice Media Fellow. Find her [@katierosequandt](#) and at [katierosequandt.com](#).

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P.O. Box 11374
Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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