

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Campaign and Advocacy

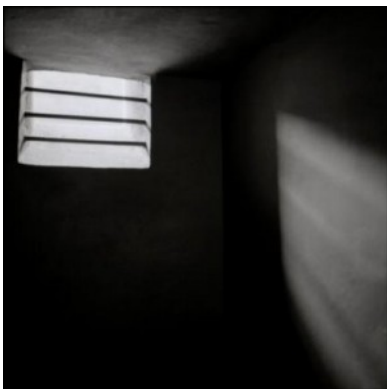
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by [Lisa Dawson](#) | January 12, 2014



The following roundup features noteworthy news, reports and opinions on solitary confinement from the past week that have not been covered in other Solitary Watch posts.

The [National Catholic Reporter](#) publishes a piece on the [Photo Requests from Solitary](#) project, noting that [i]n 2009, every man in Tamms received an intriguing letter: Tamms Year Ten Committee will make a photograph for you. Would you like to request one?"

[Politico Magazine](#) publishes a photo essay entitled This Is What Solitary Confinement Does to Your Face, a collaboration between the The Center for Investigative Reporting and KQED Public Radio with before and after photos of people who have been subjected to prolonged solitary.

[The Washington Post](#) reports on the ruling by a federal judge that Virginia's practice of automatically holding prisoners on death row in solitary confinement violates their constitutional right to due process. According to the story, U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema said that the problem is exacerbated by the extended amount of time prisoners spend on death row. A prisoner could easily spend more than a decade on death row while the appeals process plays out, and never have an opportunity to join the general population.

[The Chicago Monitor](#) reports on the detrimental effects of prolonged solitary on incarcerated youth, noting the findings of a study conducted by the ACLU and Human Rights Watch. The story states, From a psychological standpoint, many young interviewees spoke of coping with serious mental health problems during solitary confinement such as suicidal thoughts, hallucinations, depression, anxiety, disturbed sleep patterns and uncontrollable anger or rage.

[The Texas Tribune](#) reports that, due to inadequate funding, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has yet to follow through on a bill passed four months ago calling for an independent party to examine the use of solitary confinement in state prisons. According to the story, advocacy organizations are working to find dollars to pay for the study they say is critical to understanding how often solitary confinement is used, how it affects inmates and how much it costs the state.

[ABQ Journal](#) reports on the use of solitary confinement in the state of New Mexico, where officials have the goal of cutting their segregation statistics from near 10 percent of inmates to 5 percent. The story notes that if corrections authorities and prison reform advocates can work together to make one of the worst punishments prisons can mete out a rare exception rather than a rule, it could only be a good thing for New Mexico.

Amnesty International (AI) calls on authorities in Louisiana to immediately release former Black Panther Albert Woodfox, who has spent over four decades in solitary confinement, from prison. A [press release](#) issued by Amnesty states, On the eve of a federal court of appeals hearing on the case of Albert Woodfox, Amnesty International USA is calling on authorities in Louisiana to immediately release Woodfox. A remedy to the injustice inflicted on Albert Woodfox by the state is long overdue, said [AI campaigner Tessa] Murphy.

[The Wall Street Journal](#) reports that the New York City Department of Correction has curbed its use of solitary confinement of people with mental illness who break rules. According to the story, The last of the prisoners being held in the Mental Health Assessment Unit for Infracted Inmates at Rikers Island jail were reassigned Dec. 31, and what is known as the punitive segregation program has been

permanently closed, said Correction Commissioner Dora Schriro

[BBC News Magazine](#) publishes a piece describing how playing chess kept Russian human rights activist Natan Sharansky sane during his close to five years of being held in solitary confinement at a Siberian prison. In his dark, empty, freezing punishment cell, with no one to talk to, where he was forbidden to read or write, he played games in his head, obviously having to move for both sides, white and black: Thousands of games I won them all.'

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 [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 26, 2022

by [Caitlin Konya](#)

October 19, 2022

by [Mirilla Zhu](#)

October 12, 2022

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In Harford County, Maryland, a juvenile was recently held in solitary, 24 hour lockdown, for 9 months, while awaiting trial. He was 16. For the first 4 months, he was not allowed books, magazines, visits, mail, phone calls, or commissary. He had no bedding and was given only a paper hospital gown to wear. He had no access to radio or television, or any other source of entertainment. For the next 5 months, he continued in 24 hour lockdown, but was allowed phone calls, mail, visitors, and commissary. All of the other conditions remained unchanged. When he turned 17, he was placed in segregation this is 23 hour lockdown. He remained there for the next 15 months. He was only recently allowed to have bedding and a jail uniform. Please remember that he has not yet been found guilty of any crime, and is, presumably, innocent. The damage done to this boy by the justice system is unconscionable.

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