

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/771-nrcat-joins-50-organizations-calling-on-the-us-to-allow-un-torture-expert-to-examine-use-of-solitary-confinement>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2013

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National interfaith anti-torture group joins 50+ organizations calling on the U.S. to allow UN torture expert to examine use of solitary confinement

Interfaith group issues support following reports of over 80,000 in solitary confinement in U.S. prisons

WASHINGTON This week, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture joined more than 50 civil and human rights organizations in submitting a [letter](#) to U.S. officials calling for the U.S. government to allow the United Nations to conduct a fact-finding mission to examine the use of solitary confinement in detention facilities in the United States. Though Juan Mendez, the UN special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, has repeatedly requested such an examination, his requests have been ignored.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture, comprised of more than 320 diverse faith-based organizational members across the United States, joined the call for such an examination as part of its ongoing efforts to end the use of prolonged solitary confinement in U.S. jails and prisons. In May, a U.S. Government Accountability Office [report](#) was released, concluding that the Federal Bureau of Prisons has failed to evaluate the impact of solitary confinement on institutional safety and the well-being of prisoners, despite a 17 percent increase in its use of solitary confinement between 2008 and 2013. A recent UN [report](#) found an estimated 80,000 people are held in solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails. In a 2012 [report](#) presented to the United States Human Rights Council, Mendez called for a universal prohibition of prolonged solitary confinement exceeding 15 days, and a total ban on the use of solitary confinement for vulnerable populations including persons with mental disabilities and youth, finding its prolonged use a form of torture.

Mendez will serve as keynote speaker next week at a June 25 event in Washington, D.C., [Healing a Culture of Torture](#), sponsored by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, in recognition of Torture Awareness Month, commemorated throughout June.

We recognize that prolonged solitary confinement denies the essential human need for community, is associated with high rates of suicide and serious mental health problems, said Rev. Richard Killmer, executive director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. Research consistently demonstrates that the psychological effects, particularly among children and people with mental illness, are devastating. The damage of solitary confinement is a violation of human dignity and is of grave concern to the faith community.

As we join our colleagues in the call for a UN examination of the use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons, we recognize that momentum to halt the use of prolonged solitary confinement continues to build nationally, with the first-ever Congressional hearing on the use of prolonged solitary confinement convened by Illinois Senator Dick Durbin last year. In February of this year, the Federal Bureau of Prisons agreed to the first ever independent and comprehensive assessment of its use of prolonged solitary confinement in U.S. federal prisons. Now is the time for the United States to bring an end to this human rights abuse plaguing our justice system.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture advocates for eliminating the use of prolonged solitary confinement in U.S. federal and state prisons. [More information on NRCAT's work in the field of solitary confinement](#) is available at nrcat.org, as is the organizations [short documentary film](#) on solitary confinement. In 2010, NRCAT partnered with a diverse coalition of organizations in Maine to push for the successful passage of a resolve by the state legislature requiring the Department of Corrections to review its solitary confinement policies and procedures. As a result of the review and its recommendations, the solitary confinement population in Maine has been reduced by more than 70 percent.

***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 320 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.*

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