

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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YOUNGSTOWN, OHIOThe American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio today calls for action on the ongoing hunger strike at the super-maximum (super-max) security prison in a letter to Gary C. Mohr, director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and Jay Forshey, the warden of the Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown. Since last month, a number of prisoners have protested harsh policies resulting from a December 2014 assault on a corrections officer.

As a just society, we have a responsibility to ensure that our prisons treat those incarcerated fairly and humanely, said Mike Brickner, senior policy director at the ACLU of Ohio. These restrictions represent a dangerous level of solitary confinement that will substantially harm prisoners mental health. While the restrictions were a response to security concerns, they ironically pose an even greater threat to the safety of prisoners and staff. Extreme solitary confinement will only make individuals less stable and more desperate.

Learn more about what [solitary confinement](#) is like in Ohio prisons.

According to Brickner, the ACLU is investigating troubling reports concerning policies and conditions within the correctional facility. To conduct its inquiry, the organization has requested relevant records immediately from Director Moore and Warden Forshey. The ACLU also sent a separate request to State Senator Cliff Hite (R-Findlay), chair of the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee, asking for an independent investigation.

As a result of the incident, several prisoners have been put under severe restrictions, including: limiting individual rights to freely practice religion; curtailing recreation; and banning all programming, such as GED instruction and counseling services.

Whats happening at Youngstown underscores why solitary confinement simply does not work, he said. Prisons primary mission should be to provide rehabilitation to ensure people do not return. There is nothing rehabilitative about solitary confinement.

In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld that the extreme deprivation and punishment found in supermax prisons warrant protections for prisoners due process rights. The decision in *Wilkinson v. Austin* stems from a lawsuit brought by the ACLU of Ohio.

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