

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/08/03/hrc-pa-inmate-commits-suicide-in-isolation-unit/>

## Campaign and Advocacy

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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | August 3, 2012

The Human Rights Coalition in Pennsylvania has [reported](#) on the July 16th suicide of Brandon Palakovic, 23, at State Correctional Institution in Cresson (SCI-Cresson). HRC notes that the facility that is being investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice for warehousing mentally ill prisoners in the hole and depriving them of mental health treatment.

Out of a population of 1,400 prisoners, SCI-Cresson holds over 100 in solitary confinement. According to a press [release](#) by the US Department of Justice federal officials planned to investigate allegations that SCI Cresson provided inadequate mental health care to prisoners who have mental illness, failed to adequately protect such prisoners from harm, and subjected them to excessively prolonged periods of isolation, in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Palakovic had been institutionalized four times since he was eleven years old for mental health and related behavioral problems. He had been variously diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder, bipolar disorder, and had noted impulse control problems. He had been incarcerated for just under a year and a half at the time of his death. It has been reported that four days prior to his death, he had refused to take medication, resulting in his being issued a misconduct report for refusal to obey a direct order as a consequence and sent to solitary confinement in the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) as punishment.

A report from a prisoner in the RHU stated that Brandon was not taking his medication at the time of his suicide, though whether that was his choice or not was unknown. This report also discussed how Brandon had begun talking to non-existent people in his cell. Other prisoners on the block referred to Brandon by the nickname of Suicide according to two prisoner reports, reports HRC.

The Palakovic family has the following message: We loved our son, Brandon Palakovic, with all of our hearts. He was a beautiful human being who struggled in some areas in his life. Things that came easy for many were a challenge for him. However, his intelligence was something that many marveled at and something that we hoped would be the key to his success someday. Unfortunately, he never had the chance to see his someday. Our hearts are so sad knowing that Brandon's last thoughts on this earth were of desperation and hopelessness. If only he could have felt our love for him at that precise moment, maybe he would have changed his mind. We will never know. Although we cannot change what happened in that prison cell on July 16th, we can hopefully impact others and bring to light the neglect and mistreatment that many prisoners are forced to live with. If Brandon's death can positively impact even one other prisoners situation, or help a family to avoid the pain of losing a loved one to suicide, then perhaps we will begin to heal and feel like his death was not in vain.

Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

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 [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

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If the family of Brandon Palakovic reads this, or anyone that knows the family, please have them contact me. My son died in March 2012 by suicide at Cresson also. I would love to speak with them and see as united families if we can get some change at these facilities.

I did not no your son or the family ,but my heart aches for the pain and suffering that your family must be going through.I will keep Brandon and the family in my prayers.His story will be told and the truth will come out,again my prayers are with you and the family.

Your son did not die in vain. His story will be told. It is the heart ache of family not knowing what was going thru his mind at the time when he decided enough was enough. My heart goes out to your family. Please stay strong for him and others like him.

I dont know if the Palakovic family will read this blog, but if they do, I would like to tell them that my heart goes out to them, theyre in my prayers, and Im so terribly sorry for their loss.

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