

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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Solitary Confinement: Homegrown Torture

Everyday in the United States there are 80,000 people, including children, women and men held in solitary confinement in state and federal prisons. Tens of thousands more live in isolation in immigration detention centers, local jails and in youth facilities

Solitary is routinely and overwhelmingly administratively used in response to accusations of "nonviolent offenses," including street drug use, profanity, and unauthorized cigarettes or postage stamps. Folks also end up in solitary because they have untreated mental illnesses, are children deemed in need of "protection," are gay or trans, are Muslim, are accused of gang membership, or report rape or abuse by prison officials.

Solitary confinement has never been shown to decrease prison violence. It has repeatedly been shown to cause irreparable psychological damage and mental anguish. Fifty to 70% of prison suicides occur in solitary.

This appears to be a time of renewed attention to the practice of solitary and its effects. Many are trying to use this interest to reduce the number of those so imprisoned. About 5% of prisoners are held in solitary, although in states like New Mexico it is 16%.

An example of positive interest in the reality of and an appropriate, though limited, response to solitary is in New York State. There, a court settlement agreement reached in mid-February, bars solitary for disciplining prisoners under 18--the largest prison system in the U.S. so far to do so. New York State youth below 18 must now be given at least five hours a day of outdoor exercise and out-of-cell programming.

In addition, solitary confinement as a disciplinary measure is also to be prohibited for pregnant prisoners. Solitary confinement is to be limited to 30 days for prisoners who are considered to be "developmentally disabled." (The UN holds 15 days the acceptable limit.)

There are reportedly about 3,800 New York State prisoners currently being held in "extreme isolation" cells. The most commonly cited reason for such treatment reported that, from 2007 to 2011, 68,000 such sentences were issued. The most common reason given, in 35,000 instances, was "failure to obey an order."

Additional states are taking steps to reduce the use of solitary. They include: Colorado, Mississippi and Washington. A second congressional hearing on solitary confinement held by the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, chaired by Sen. Durbin, occurred on February 25, 2014. It was to explore developments since the first hearing, held in June 2012 and then to discuss what should be done to protect human rights and to end that torture.

We could just stop it. Others have.

FED PRISONERS FORCE FED AGAIN

On the same day in February as the congressional hearing mentioned above, up to nine prisoners caged at the federal Administrative Maximum Facility (ADX) prison's H-Unit in Florence CO, were on hunger strike and being nasally force-fed. This is the "highest security prison run by the federal government on U.S. soil...." In 2007, the tv news program *60 Minutes* reported that there had been 900 instances of force-feedings at H-Unit since 2001. The U.N. human rights office in addition to considering indefinite solitary confinement to be torture under international law, also considers nasal force-feeding, as practiced at U.S. prisons (including those not on U.S. soil), torture under international law.

We could just stop it. Others have.

Resources: Solitary Watch, PO Box 11374, Washington DC 20008

National Religious Campaign Against Torture, 110 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 502, Washington DC 20002.

CRIME OF THE MONTH

Recently, European Parliament President Martin Schultz, himself a supporter of Zionism, asked publicly why Israelis are allotted more water per person than Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank. Indeed, his suggestion that Palestinians receive only 25% as much water as Israelis was untrue. On average they receive only 30% as much. How dare Schultz "incite against Jews" this way?

In response, Israel's Prime Minister employed an all-too-familiar Zionist misdirection tactic: he attacked the messenger, saying that because Schultz chose to listen to the truth, "...he suffers from selective hearing."

Illegal Israeli colonies in the West Bank are strategically located atop major aquifers. Palestinians are systematically denied permits to drill wells on their own property and existing wells are often sabotaged by gangs of armed colonists or demolished by the Israeli military.

In an attempt to supplement their meager water allotments, Palestinians sometimes construct rainwater collection systems, which the Israeli occupiers regularly demolish under the pretext that they were built without permits. Of course, the Israeli military refuses to grant these permits to Palestinians. Even the rain belongs to the Zionists.

Our Crime of the Month is Israel's continued theft of Palestinian resources in violation of international law.

To receive the Newsletter by postal mail each month, send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address)--up to 12 at one time.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests, in order to be sent the yearly holiday card/ new calendar each January.

Also, please note that the only address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. There are resource listings which, unfortunately use an incorrect address.

Remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS. It is important not to mark any envelopes sent to us as "legal mail."

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making our monthly Newsletter available on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at: <http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org/coalition.html> -- this is a GREAT site!

We depend on our readers' donations & thank you for your support! Mil gracias!

TORTURA EN LA SOLEDAD EN PRISIONES DE MUJERES

La reclusión solitaria es utilizada para quebrantar a las personas, para recordarle que no tienen ningún poder sobre sus propias vidas y para prevenir que luchan contra su propia experiencia inhumana en prisión.

Aunque una mujer presente buena conducta y un programa ejemplo, si alguien le causa de ser una "enemiga" es puesta en reclusión solitaria. Así como una mujer es abusada en una relación íntima, donde el abusador le dice que la está protegiendo de otros hombres y es aislada por su propio bien. Ésta es la respuesta sexista del oficiales al conflicto en las prisiones de mujeres y sus efectos devastadores.

Por la extrema sobre-población en las prisiones de Califas, los conflictos en el CCWF han aumentado y el Ad-Seg es utilizado como una solución para el personal de la prisión. Si las mujeres tiene des-habilidades mentales que no pueden ser controladas fácilmente por medio de medicamentos, son enviadas a Ad-Seg, lo cual por supuesto solo hace que su salud mental empeore.

Recurso: Red de Mujeres Encarceladas, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 1540 Market St, Room 490, San Francisco CA 94102.

We must always stand together, fearless & unified against any intruder who tries to take our lives, our families, our freedom.

Fight for Lifers West

Fight for Lifers West (contact them at: PO Box 455, Meadowlands PA 15347, e-mail fightforliferswest@yahoo.com) lists over 125 family members and friends in the Greater Pittsburgh area. We are reaching out to learn why people have stopped coming to our monthly meetings and we are also trying to encourage more people to start attending. There are no requirements for membership; we welcome anyone who is interested in the plight of lifers and their family members and friends. Many of the lifers who write to us assume that we have a large fellowship of volunteers who can assist them in their quest to obtain freedom when, in fact, we have only a few dedicated individuals who struggle to keep the organization afloat.

Lifers are basically just warehoused and treated as less than human beings; they have so very little. Their appeals are often time barred; new legislation is rarely proposed. We are asking for your help. Our lifers need you.