

Human Rights Day 2013

Solitary Confinement in an Age of Mass Incarceration

Action and Advocacy

To commemorate the 65th anniversary of the adoption and proclamation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Day (December 10th), we call upon our brothers and sisters of faith to rally together to end the abusive use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons.

What the Faith Community Can Do

Sign and Distribute NRCAT's Statement Against Prolonged Solitary Confinement

Ending long-term solitary confinement starts with your signature. The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) gathers endorsements from people of faith nationally for a statement calling on government officials all across the country to take steps to end the use of prolonged solitary confinement. When we reach 500 endorsers from a particular state, we will send the statement, along with the list of those endorsers, to that state's governor and top corrections official, along with every member of that state's legislature.

Add your signature online, or download the hardcopy for distribution in your congregation or community, at www.nrcat.org/solitary.

Show *Solitary Confinement: Torture in Your Backyard* in Your Congregation

NRCAT created a 20-minute film, *Solitary Confinement: Torture in Your Backyard* to engage religious communities in confronting solitary confinement across the country. You will hear from survivors of solitary confinement, including Sarah Shourd, one of three American hikers arrested in Iran, who was held in solitary confinement for 14 months. The film discusses how the religious community in Maine helped support a 70% reduction in the number of Maine prisoners held in solitary confinement.

For more information and to access the film and other resources, visit www.nrcat.org/backyard.

In commemoration of Human Rights Day, also consider hosting a film screening or series, featuring additional videos about solitary confinement and mass incarceration: www.nrcat.org/hrd2013-resources.

Join a State Campaign to End Prolonged Solitary Confinement

NRCAT supports state partner organizations in their work to educate the faith community about the abusive use of solitary confinement and to advocate for legislation to end its use. In states where NRCAT does not have a designated local partner, but legislation or other significant efforts to limit solitary confinement are underway, NRCAT informs people of faith about these efforts and provides advocacy tools. For more information on state campaigns, go to www.nrcat.org/states.

Organize a Reading or Production of "If the SHU Fits"

"If the SHU Fits" shares voices of survivors of solitary confinement and their loved ones. This resource powerfully weaves together excerpts of letters, blog entries, government reports, and speeches of family members and survivors, all organized into a one-hour Reader's Theatre Format. To learn more and download the script, go to www.nrcat.org/if-the-shu-fits.

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Solitary Confinement in an Age of Mass Incarceration Statewide Action across California

In the summer of 2013, **over 30,000 incarcerated people** in California began a historic hunger strike to protest the inhumane conditions of long-term solitary confinement in California prisons. Hundreds fasted for 60 consecutive days. On Thursday, September 5, the 60th day of the hunger strike, it was suspended. As a result of the hunger strike, a series of joint legislative hearings have begun in California to address the issues raised by the hunger strike.

Approximately 12,000 incarcerated people are held in solitary confinement each day in California prisons, denied basic human rights like fresh air, sunshine, or human contact. These prisoners are held in solitary for an average of 6.8 years, with hundreds held for more than 10 years, and dozens for more than 20 years. California's use of solitary confinement is indefinite, with no clear pathway to release from isolation. *The religious community has an important role to play in supporting continued efforts to end torture in California prisons:*

Learn about the issues

- Background information at www.nrcat.org/ca-hunger-strike-2013
- Read the 2012 Call to End Hostilities: <http://bit.ly/1ar22Pe>
- Watch and share video excerpts from the first hearing: <http://youtu.be/fqXFd7sz-Jw>
- Sign up for regular updates from the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity: <http://bit.ly/1a5yHpe>

Show your support

- Sign the NRCAT statement to end solitary confinement: www.nrcat.org/solitary
- Sign a letter to Gov. Jerry Brown urging him to abolish indefinite solitary confinement in California: <http://bit.ly/12yGxVY>
- Join the Emergency Response Network for updates and action items from the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Network: <http://bit.ly/16wj9A1>
- Write a letter to an incarcerated person: www.nrcat.org/letter-writing-project

Contact California public officials

- CA State Senator Loni Hancock and Assemblymember Tom Ammiano have held the first in a series of legislative hearings on solitary confinement in response to the historic hunger strike. Encourage your local representative to support the abolition of solitary confinement: <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>
- Call the California Department of Corrections and voice your concerns about the use of solitary confinement at (916) 324-3397.

Plan an event with your congregation

- Distribute educational materials in your faith community or neighborhood: <http://bit.ly/18QkD6U>
- Show a video and facilitate a discussion in your faith community: www.nrcat.org/backyard
- Invite a NRCAT representative to present the issues to your faith community and facilitate a discussion: Email Steve Smith stevensmith1@fuller.edu or Virginia Classick vclassick@aol.com

Join vigils across the state to end long term solitary confinement in CA prisons and jails

- Attend vigil in Arcata, CA, Thursdays at 5 pm, and a vigil in Oakland, CA, Fridays at 5 pm
More details can be found at www.prisonershungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/take-action

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Solitary Confinement in an Age of Mass Incarceration Statewide Action across New York State

*Join the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) and
National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)
in Confronting Solitary Confinement as Torture this Human Rights Day, December 10.*

What You Need to Know About Solitary in NY

Solitary Confinement is Inhumane, Counterproductive, and an Extension of Mass Incarceration

People in isolated confinement spend 22 to 24 hours a day locked in a cell the size of an elevator, alone or with one other person. They may be permitted one hour to exercise alone in a cage. They do not receive any meaningful programs or therapy, and cannot make phone calls. The sensory deprivation, lack of normal human interaction, and extreme idleness can lead to intense suffering and severe psychological damage.

People of Color are Disproportionately Held in Solitary Confinement

On any given day, as many as 4,200 men, women, and children are in solitary confinement and other forms of extreme isolation in New York State prisons. Thousands of others are in solitary in other local city and county jails across the state, as well as in Federal prisons and immigration detention centers in the state. Black and Latino men, women, and children are held in isolation at even more disproportionate rates than in the general prison population. The vast majority of people in isolation are there because of alleged non-violent conduct.

People are in Solitary Confinement for Months, Years, and Even Decades

New York places **no limit** on time in solitary confinement. Most people sent to isolation spend months or years there. Some individuals have been in solitary confinement in New York's prisons for more than two decades. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has denounced solitary confinement exceeding 15 days.

Even Particularly Vulnerable Groups are Subjected to Solitary Confinement

Children or people with mental illness fare even worse in "the box"—yet they are disproportionately likely to end up there. Even pregnant women, elderly people, and people with severe physical disabilities are held in isolation in NYS. Members of the LGBTQI community have suffered additional staff abuse by being placed in solitary confinement.

What CAIC Demands that Our Officials Do

- **Fundamentally transform the response to people's needs and problematic behaviors**, from deprivation and isolation to additional support, programs, and therapy. The response, both in prisons and our communities, must be one that is humane and effective.
- **Stop placing people in solitary confinement.**
- **At a minimum, ensure no person is ever held in isolated confinement beyond 15 days**, and drastically restrict the criteria that can result in such placement.
- **Never place particularly vulnerable people in solitary for even one day**, including the young, elderly, or pregnant, those with a disability or mental health need, or who identify as LGBTQI.

What You Can Do and Can Encourage Others to Do on Human Rights Day

LEARN the facts about solitary and other forms of prison isolation in New York at:

www.nycaic.org

www.boxedinny.org

www.solitarywatch.com

www.nycjac.org

www.correctionalassociation.org

www.nreat.org/ny-prisons

JOIN the Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement at www.nycaic.org. CAIC holds monthly meetings in person and by teleconference and engages in action, vigils, workshops, and advocacy. Please sign up for our monthly email newsletter at www.eepurl.com/CjxOv, or join a working listserv by sending an email to ny_caic-subscribe@lists.riseup.net. You can also follow CAIC on Twitter www.twitter.com/nycaic or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NYCAIC.

SHARE a story on your Facebook from CAIC's Facebook page www.facebook.com/NYCAIC.

SHARE a narrative on CAIC's Facebook/website about how solitary confinement has impacted you or a friend or family member. You can email such narratives to Suzanne Koneschusky at SKoneschusky@urbanjustice.org.

WRITE to your state legislators and to the following officials demanding an end to the torture of isolated confinement. Please incorporate your own experiences and choose two or three of the above facts and/or demands to incorporate as well:

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Mr. Thomas P. Abt
Deputy Secretary for Public
Safety
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Mr. Anthony J. Annucci
Acting Commissioner
NYS DOCCS
1220 Washington Avenue,
Building 2
Albany, New York 12226

JOIN OR ORGANIZE A VIGIL to end the torture of solitary confinement in NY prisons & jails:

- Come out for a CAIC vigil in New York City on the evening of Dec. 10. For more details, contact Suzanne Koneschusky at SKoneschusky@urbanjustice.org or 646-459-3044.
- Come out to a CAIC vigil on Long Island. For more details, contact Claire Deroche at CDeroche@uucsr.org or 516-472-2977.
- Organize or join a vigil in other parts of the state. If you are interested, please contact Suzanne Koneschusky at SKoneschusky@urbanjustice.org or 646-459-3044.

PREPARE a Sermon, film screening, or Discussion Group at your congregation during the weekends before/after the 10th. NRCAT has prayers and resources available at www.nrcat.org/human-rights-day.