

September 14, 2022

Dear Governor Newsom,

As leading California religious organizations representing a diversity of faith communities throughout our state, we write with a sense of moral urgency to call on you to sign the **California Mandela Act on Solitary Confinement** into law.

This legislation, inspired by the United Nations Nelson Mandela Rules, which defines prolonged solitary confinement as torture, provides an opportunity for California to move to the right side of history in relationship to this critical human rights issue. The United Nations, leading medical and mental health experts, and other developed nations broadly recognize the use of prolonged solitary confinement as a form of torture. And yet in our nation, the practice is commonplace and largely unregulated. Individuals can be held in isolated conditions of confinement for months, years, and here in California, even decades. Yet the tide is turning and in 2022, Connecticut became the third state in the U.S. to ban prolonged isolated confinement legislatively, following New Jersey in 2019 and New York in 2021.

Now is the time for California to keep pace with the national movement to end this devastating practice impacting thousands of incarcerated people, their families and loved ones, and our communities to which they return.

The California Mandela Act on Solitary Confinement defines solitary confinement as any period of confinement that exceeds 17 hours in a cell, mandates that facilities document any instance in which solitary is used, and places limits on the duration any person can be held in these conditions. The bill also bans the use of solitary confinement for certain populations including people who are pregnant, have disabilities, or fall within certain age limits.

Our various faith traditions hold in common a belief in the inherent dignity and worth of each human person. Complete isolation violates basic religious values of redemption, compassion, and restorative justice. As religious organizations, we stand in solidarity with the leadership of detained and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families who have worked tirelessly on this issue and have called upon us to join them in this sacred pursuit. In 2013, over [30,000 people organized](#) inside California prisons to protest solitary confinement and communities of faith and religious leaders nationwide expressed their solidarity and support. Today, the California Mandela Act builds upon the decades of work done by detained individuals, activists and organizers to replace the tombs of solitary confinement with rehabilitation, restorative justice, and community.

Solitary confinement is torture. As moral leaders in our state, we call upon you to use the power of your pen to end this destructive practice that violates basic principles of human rights and the inherent God-given human dignity bestowed on all. We urge you to sign the California Mandela Act into law today.

Sincerely,

All Saints Church, Pasadena  
American Friends Service Committee  
Board of Missions and Social Justice, Arlington Community Church (UCC)  
California Catholic Conference  
California Council of Churches IMPACT  
Congregation Rodef Sholom, San Rafael

Diocese of Fresno, CA  
Diocese of Monterey  
Diocese of Oakland - Office for Life and Justice  
Faith In Action Bay Area  
First Congregational Church of Palo Alto, UCC  
First United Methodist Church, Pasadena  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
GLIDE, San Francisco  
Holy Family Parish, San Jose  
Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, San Jose  
Insight Santa Cruz, a Buddhist Center  
Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace  
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity  
Jewish Studio Project  
Jewish Voice for Peace, Santa Cruz Chapter  
Justice Revival  
Kanfot Ha'aretz  
Leo Baeck Temple, Los Angeles  
Monterey County Methodists for Social Justice  
Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice  
National Religious Campaign Against Torture  
Nefesh, Los Angeles  
Now We Rise!  
Office of Restorative Justice, Diocese of Santa Rosa  
Or Hamidbar, Palm Springs  
Saints Simon & Jude Catholic Church, Huntington Beach  
Sleepy Hollow Presbyterian Church, San Anselmo  
Temple Beth El, Aptos  
Tri-Valley Cultural Jews (a CSJO community)  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society