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National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

Promoting human rights rooted
in human dignity

Working to end torture in U.S.
policy, practice and culture

Founded in 2006
National interfaith membership
organization

Representatives from the
Catholic, evangelical Christian,
mainline Protestant, Orthodox
Christian, Jewish, Muslim,
Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist,
Unitarian Universalist, Quaker,
and Sikh communities

Members include national
denominations and faith
groups, regional organizations
and local congregations





National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

Ending torture in U.S. prisons

Principles guiding interfaith work to end solitary confinement:

Following the leadership of those
most impacted by solitary
confinement and mass incarceration

Restorative Justice

Mental health implications

Recommendation of the United
Nations Special Rapporteur on
Torture: prohibit solitary beyond 15
days, ban it for the most vulnerable

Impact of solitary on incarcerated
people, families, correctional staff

Human rights and human dignity

Racial justice

The Mandela Rules

Public Safety



Sitawa Nantambu
Jamaa and his sister,
Marie Levin



Leading the movement: Survivors of Solitary and their Families

"This victory was achieved by the efforts of people in prison, their families and loved ones, lawyers, and outside supporters. Our movement rests on a foundation of unity: our (2012) Agreement to End Hostilities.

It is our hope that this groundbreaking agreement to end the violence between the various ethnic groups in California prisons will inspire not only state prisoners, but also jail detainees, county prisoners and our communities on the street, to oppose ethnic and racial violence. From this foundation, **the prisoners' human rights movement is awakening the conscience of the nation to recognize that we are fellow human beings.**"

--Plaintiffs in the Ashker v. Brown federal class action suit, respond to the historic settlement. Learn more [here](#).



Catholic opposition to solitary confinement

“We stand opposed to this treatment because it is not restorative...International human rights standards consider more than 15 days in isolation to be torture. The world is watching...”

Bishop Richard Garcia,
Chairman of the Restorative
Justice Committee of the
California Conference of
Catholic Bishops and Bishop of
the Diocese of Monterey (July
12, 2013)

Read the full statement [here](#).



Disciples of Christ 2015 Resolution

Resolution 1525 – A Call to End Solitary Confinement

Approval of Proposal for Reflection and Research: During the 2015-2017 biennium, a reflection and research process accountable by report to the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the 2017 General Assembly

To encourage the church to engage in **reflection, prayer, education, and possible action around the practice of solitary confinement** of incarcerated youth and adults.

Disciples' congregations and prison and jail ministries will serve as venues where discussion, discourse and discernment can occur as we examine and explore the issue of solitary confinement.

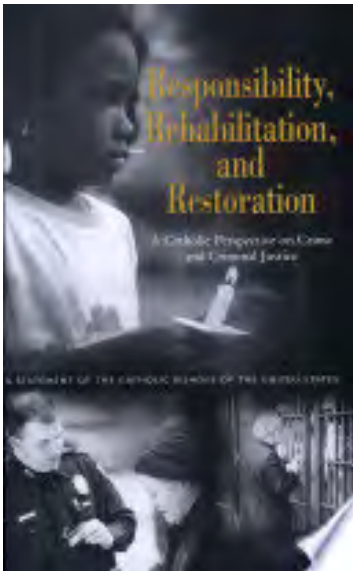
Full text available [here](#).



GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JULY 18-22 2015 • COLUMBUS, OHIO

Catholic Call to End Torture

Catholic Mobilizing Network web tool about solitary confinement, **available [here](#)**.



Pope Francis has spoken out powerfully for the rights of incarcerated people, calling "confinement in high security prisons" a form of torture and saying that torture is "a grave sin, but even more, it is a sin against humanity."

The US Catholic Bishops, in **Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice** (November 15, 2000) wrote, "We oppose the increasing use of isolation units, especially in the absence of due process, and the monitoring and professional assessment of the effects of such confinement on the mental health of inmates." [Read more](#).

Supporting change at the federal level



On June 19, 2012, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights held a hearing entitled **Reassessing Solitary Confinement: The Human Rights, Fiscal, and Public Safety Consequences.**

The hearing was the **first time** Congress specifically addressed solitary confinement.

NRCAT members attended the hearing in D.C., and hundreds more joined in a **nationwide fast for 23 hours** prior to the hearing - symbolizing the 23 hours incarcerated people spend in solitary confinement cells per day.

Hundreds of people of faith across the nation participated in fasting, to urge Congress to act.

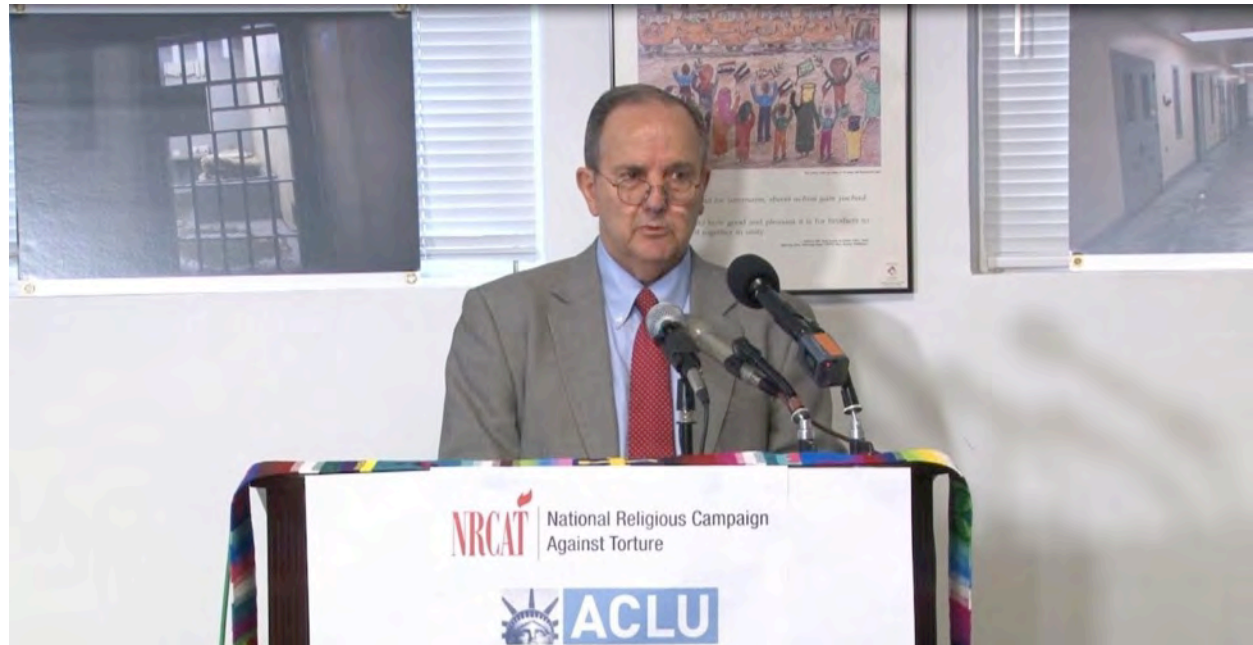
2014 Congressional Hearing on Solitary Confinement

On February 25, 2014 the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights hosted a hearing:

Reassessing Solitary Confinement II: The Human Rights, Fiscal, and Public Safety Consequences.

More than **15 religious organizations** submitted testimony for the record.

NRCAT co-sponsored a gathering of national faith leaders, survivors of solitary confinement and their families, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, in advance of the hearing. **Video and testimony [here](#).**



NRCAT Shadow Report Submitted Sept 2014

Torture in U.S. Prisons: Interfaith Religious Coalition Calls for End to Widespread Use of Prolonged Solitary Confinement

September 2014

A Shadow Report Prepared for the United Nations
Committee Against Torture in Connection to its Review
of the United States Compliance with the Convention
Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading
Treatment or Punishment

Full report available [here](#).

"In the United States, the
**continued widespread
practice of holding prisoners,
disproportionately
people of color,
in prolonged solitary
confinement in U.S. prisons
constitutes torture**, in
violation of the Convention
Against Torture and Other
Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading
Treatment
or Punishment (CAT)."



National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

Dear Mr. President: It's time to stop solitary.

Over 20 national religious organizations – including the **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)**, the **Union for Reform Judaism**, the **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)** in the **United States and Canada**, and the **Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church** – joined the call for the White House to ensure the nationwide review outlines a clear path toward ending long-term solitary confinement.

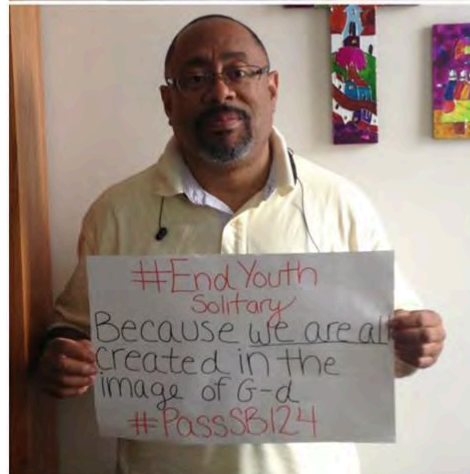
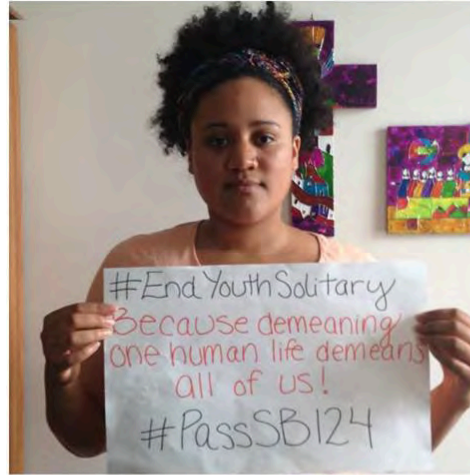
On Oct 1, 2015:

126 Organizations, including 39 Religious Organizations, delivered an open letter to the White House calling for the President to ensure the DOJ's nationwide review of solitary includes a clear path to the elimination of long-term isolation.

Full text of the letter is available [here](#).

Supporting Legislation State by State

More states passed solitary confinement reforms in 2014 than in the past 16 years.



New York

Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ACT

Key Components of the bill include:

Creating alternatives to Isolated confinement for any person separated from general population for more than 15 continuous days. It requires they must be in a separate secure residential rehabilitation unit (RRU) – a rehabilitative and therapeutic unit aimed at providing additional programs, therapy, and support to address underlying needs and causes of behavior, with 6 hours per day of out-of-cell programming plus 1 hour of out-of-cell recreation.

Ending long-term Isolated confinement, establishing a standard that no person may be held in isolated confinement more than 15 consecutive days nor 20 days total in any 60 day period. At these limits, a person must be released or diverted to the alternative RRU with more out-of-cell time, programs, and therapy



New York State Council of Churches

Resolution opposing the Use of Prolonged Solitary Confinement in the Correctional Facilities of New York State and New York City

"We believe that God created human beings with an **inherent dignity** to be respected at all times and in all places. We believe that the image of God, the human worth of every person, is nurtured, fulfilled and held accountable only in relationship, in human community. Therefore, we believe that **prolonged isolation imposed on any person is inhumane, torturous, degrading to the human spirit, and contrary to the will of God.**"

The New York State Council of Churches hereby resolves: "To call on New York legislators to pass the Humane Alternatives to Long Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, to ensure that the torture of solitary confinement is ended forever in New York."

Full statement available [here](#).

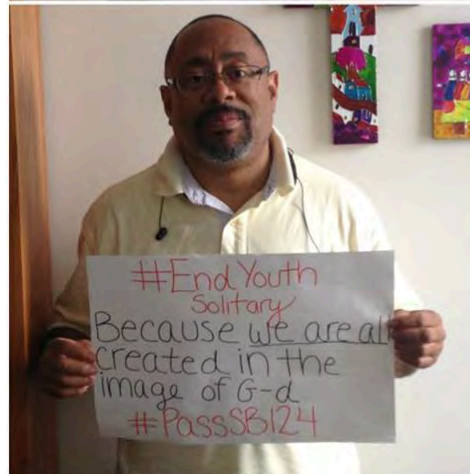
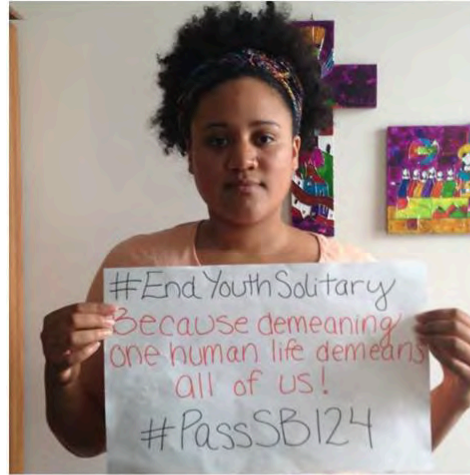


California

SB 124, a bill to address the solitary confinement of youth in the juvenile justice system

SB 124 would bring these urgently needed reforms in California:

- Define solitary confinement as the placement of a person in a locked room or cell alone with minimal or no contact with persons other than guards, correctional staff, and attorneys.
- Provide that solitary confinement shall only be used when a young person poses an immediate and substantial risk of harm to others or the security of the facility, and when all other less restrictive options have been attempted and exhausted.
- Provide that a youth shall only be held in solitary confinement for the minimum time necessary to address the safety risk, not to exceed four hours.
- Empower existing county juvenile justice commission



Standing together for
accountability





Wisconsin

WISDOM Wisconsin, a grassroots organization, comprised mostly of religious congregations of many denominations, including 160 congregations, of 19 different religious traditions, which works to have a common voice on issues of social justice.



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St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church, Washington D.C.

Design and construction of the
NRCAT replica solitary
confinement cell is made
possible through partnership
with
The Prison Ministry Project,
First Congregational United
Church of Christ, Madison, WI
and WISDOM Wisconsin.

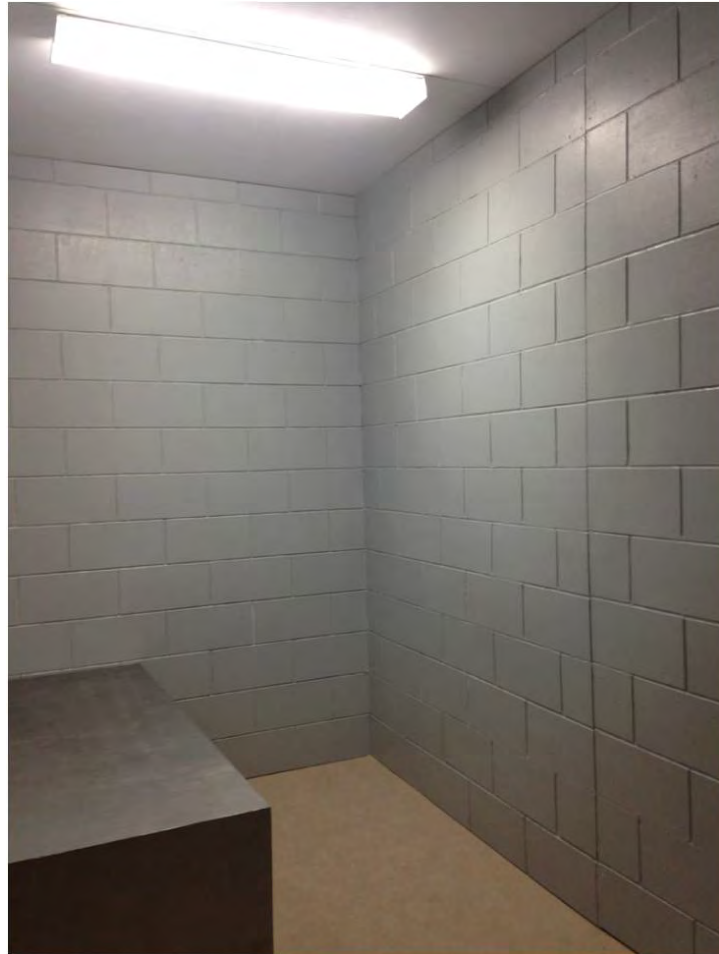


Reflections from the replica

"After just a few minutes in solitary, I began looking at the brick wall, wondering how solid it was, how those lines fit together. I heard the sounds of banging and cries, and couldn't decide whether to wish it would stop, or whether complete silence would be more terrifying. No blanket. Not a single soft thing, other than my own body. Turning harder by the moment.

How would I live if this were my whole world for days? Weeks? Months? Years?"

Rev. Lee , participant at
Ecumenical Advocacy Days, April
17-20, 2015



Reflections from the replica

"When is day? When is night?
When is time? Does it really exist?
Are we really human? Am I
human? How do I know that I am
human? And what of the people
who have done this to me? Do
they know that I am here? What
are they? How can I reach them?
Do I exist for them?
The voices outside have drowned
out. I can only hear this incessant
banging.

What is time? Is it five minutes? Is
it ten? There is no handle. I can
only survive if I keep writing;
writing blocks everything out.
What if I had no pen?
What is freedom then? Will it
come? Does it exist?
I was only in for ten minutes and
see what it did to me."

Participant at Ecumenical
Advocacy Days, April 17-20, 2015



Ecumenical Advocacy Days Washington D.C.



Ecumenical Advocacy Days Washington D.C.



Islamic Circle of North American Annual Convention Baltimore, Maryland



Nationwide Actions on the 23rd of each month

Communities across the country are joining Together to End Solitary Confinement.

On the 23rd of every month, join people throughout the U.S. who are holding monthly actions to call for an end to the torture of solitary, at the recommendation of people incarcerated in Pelican Bay prison who led the momentous hunger strikes in California prisons.

Together we can end the torture of solitary confinement and make human rights a reality for all people. **#together**

Learn more at:
togethertoendsolitary.org



TOGETHER **TO END**
SOLITARY



nrcat.org/breakingdownthebox

Breaking Down the Box

40 minute documentary and
interfaith discussion guide
available at:

nrcat.org/breakingdownthebox



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National Religious Campaign
Against Torture



For More Information

If you have questions or want more information on how you or your ministry can respond, welcome and engage, contact:

NBA Prison and Jail Ministries
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NBA Disciples Care Exchange
& Affinity Groups
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mkilpatrick@nbacares.org

**A Special Thanks to our
presenters:**

**Rev. Laura Markle Downton
Mr. Johnny Perez**

Thank you to our co-sponsors:

Disciples Center
for Public Witness

Disciples Justice Action
Network

Reconciliation Ministry

Get Connected

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and join the
NBA Prison and Jail Ministries
Facebook Group

Visit our Contact Us page
to learn more about NBA:

<http://www.nbacares.org/contact-us>