



c/o Urban Justice Center
123 Williams Street, 16th floor
New York, NY 10038

December 3, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

The Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) writes in anticipation of Human Rights Day, December 10, 2013, with deep and urgent concern about New York State's extensive use of isolated confinement and the safety and welfare of the more than 5,000 people currently subjected to these harsh conditions of confinement in New York State prisons and jails.

CAIC has 39 organizational members and brings together advocates, formerly incarcerated persons, family members of currently incarcerated people, concerned community members, lawyers, and individuals in the human rights, health, and faith communities throughout New York State.

CAIC defines isolated confinement as the confinement of people in a cell for 22 to 24 hours a day without meaningful human contact, programming, or therapy. This practice is ineffective, counterproductive, unsafe, inhumane, and causes people detained in these conditions to deteriorate psychologically, physically, and socially. Despite these facts, New York utilizes this practice at disturbing rates, well above the national average.

On March 18, 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan E. Méndez, wrote to the United States government seeking information about the practice of extreme isolation and solitary confinement in New York State prisons and the welfare of three individuals subjected to this treatment. He has not yet received this information.

CAIC urges that the U.S. Department of State compile the information requested and provide it to Mr. Méndez. Furthermore, we call on you to facilitate Mr. Méndez's access to visit state prisons and county jails across New York. Mr. Méndez visits jails and prisons around the world in his capacity with the United Nations. The United States – and New York State, in particular – must step up to meet the same standards of human rights to which we hold the rest of the world accountable.

With Human Rights Day approaching, we join in calling on you to take these steps to honor the humanity and dignity of New Yorkers suffering the torture of solitary confinement.

Sincerely,

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for The Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement
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