



The Human Rights Implications of Solitary Confinement, Extreme Sentencing, and the Death Penalty

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In the past two years, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, has condemned the death penalty and solitary confinement, finding that the imposition of these punishments can constitute torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Mendez called for the absolute prohibition of the death penalty and solitary confinement on juveniles and persons with mental disabilities. He additionally recommended the implementation of alternative disciplinary sanctions, and called for the universal prohibition of solitary confinement exceeding 15 days.

In addition to these practices, extreme criminal sentencing, such as life without the possibility of parole and consecutive sentencing statutes that result in excessively long periods of incarceration, have led to over-incarceration in some States, most notably in the United States. These sentencing schemes fail to uphold rehabilitation as the goal of incarceration.

This briefing will examine each of these issues related to sentencing, punishment, and incarceration in the context of accepted and evolving international human rights standards. The panelists will provide recommendations for the future to promote and protect human dignity for incarcerated individuals and those facing the death penalty.

PANELISTS:

JUAN MENDEZ

Special Rapporteur on Torture

Global human rights implications of solitary confinement and the death penalty

JAMIL DAKWAR

American Civil Liberties Union

Solitary confinement and the death penalty in the United States

JAQUELINE MACALESHER

Penal Reform International

The death row phenomenon

PROFESSOR CONSTANCE DE LA VEGA

Human Rights Advocates

University of San Francisco School of Law

Extreme sentencing, private prisons, and mass incarceration in the United States

VIVIAN CALDERONI

Conectas Human Rights

Solitary Confinement in Brazil

PHIL LYNCH

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Moderator

Co-Sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva

Please contact humanrights@aclu.org with questions.