



December 16, 2019

Board of Correction  
1 Centre Street, Room 2213  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Notice of Rulemaking Concerning Restrictive Housing in Correctional Facilities**

Dear Members of the Board of Correction,

My name is Ryan Brown, I am the Group Coordinator for the Brooklyn chapter of Amnesty International, also known as Amnesty International Brooklyn Local Group 27. Amnesty International is the largest human rights organization in the world with millions of dues-paying members worldwide. Two of the major human rights violations that Amnesty fights against in this country are the death penalty and the torture of solitary confinement. Well, we've still got the death penalty in NY State, it's called "death by incarceration". A thousand people have died in our prisons and jails while Cuomo has been Governor and thousands more will die unless we fix our broken parole system and get rid of excessive life-without-parole sentences. We also still have solitary confinement – this is another kind of death-by-incarceration. One man who has spent over 25 years and counting in solitary confinement in NY prisons has called solitary a "living death." So yes, we still have the death penalty in New York.

Amnesty International has said of solitary confinement that the "callous and dehumanizing practice of holding [people] in prolonged solitary confinement ... amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and is in violation of international law." We like to consider New York an international city, but how can we do so if we are in violation of international law? We shouldn't consider ourselves international just because we indulge wealthy global investors, we should be international because we uphold basic principles for treating our fellow human beings with respect and humaneness, no matter who they are or where they're from.

One of the U.S. human rights cases that Amnesty worked on was that of Albert Woodfox, who was held in solitary confinement in Louisiana for over 40 years. He said that, "the sole purpose of solitary confinement is to destroy human spirit." What possible justification can the Board give the people of New York City for not ending a sadistic form of torture whose sole purpose is to destroy human spirit?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is only a few weeks away on January 20. Here is what he wrote about his own experience in solitary confinement: "For more than twenty-four hours, I was held incommunicado, in solitary confinement ... Those were the longest, most frustrating and bewildering hours I have lived. Having no contact of any kind, I was besieged with worry. I suffered no physical brutality at the hands of my jailers. Some of the prison personnel were surly and abusive.... Solitary confinement, however, was brutal enough ... **You will never know the meaning of utter darkness until you have lain in such a dungeon.**"

I ask the Board to follow the Blueprint for Ending Solitary Confinement and bring this sick practice completely to an end in NYC jails.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "B".

Ryan Brown

Coordinator, Amnesty International Brooklyn Local Group 27

#HALTsolitary Campaign