CONFINEMENT
in a small windowless concrete cell is TORTURE

5 CORE DEMANDS
• End long - term solitary confinement
• Abolish de-briefing, change gang validation criteria
• End group punishment
• Provide educational, vocational and self-help programs
• Provide adequate nutritious food

In California
10,000+ adults are in SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

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View into a cell at Pelican Bay SHU

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Support their Demands
Stop the Torture
Contact Gov Jerry Brown

Peacefully protesting this torture, they resumed their HUNGER STRIKE
How Prisoners Get to Solitary

Confinement is not part of the sentence received from the judge at trial. Prison administrators assign prisoners to solitary. Thousands of prisoners are in solitary based on the prison's determination that they are associated with a prison gang, not for committing a violent act or breaking a prison rule. The evidence of gang association can be as trivial as who signed their birthday card, what books they read, the art they draw, or who they say ‘hi’ to. It is often based on general statements of secret witnesses who have provided this information to get out of solitary confinement themselves (“debriefing”). There is no trial, only a short hearing with no lawyer, no rules of evidence, no impartial hearing officer and no meaningful review.

Prisoners assigned to the SHU for acts of violence or rule-breaking receive a fixed SHU term of maximum 5 years. Prisoners who are assigned to the SHU only for their associations often remain in solitary in the SHU for life, even with good behavior.

Solitary is Widespread

California uses long term solitary confinement more than any other state and incarcerates over 10,000 people in various forms of solitary. At Pelican Bay SHU (Secure Housing Units) 500 men have lived in solitary over 10 years, 78 over 20 years, at least two over 40 years.

Severely of Confinement Does Not Increase Prison or Public Safety

In 2012, the multiracial inmate leadership of the 1st Pelican Bay Hunger Strike housed in Pelican Bay’s (SHU) issued an Agreement to End Hostilities:

“This means from this date on, all racial group hostilities need to be at an end...; do not allow personal, individual issues to escalate into racial group issues.”

They asked that this call be posted and given to all California prisoners. CDCR refused.

Pelican Bay SuperMax SHU

Concrete windowless cells less than 8’ x 12” contain a sink, a toilet, a concrete stub to sit on, a stub for a counter. Two bed slabs protrude from the back wall. The door/wall is steel-plate with penny-sized holes. The food slot is also used for prisoners to stoop for shackling on the few occasions they leave their ‘pod’. Prisoners sleep on a thin lumpy mattress with 2 thin blankets. Prisoners exercise alone inside cavernous dank concrete ‘dog runs’. The food, lousy to disgusting, rarely warm, is insufficient in calories and nutrition. Never feeling sun, breathing fresh air, seeing a tree or a bird, the prisoners are never touched except when shackled. Solitary confinement creates and accelerates mental illness.

The men are in their cells at least 22 ½ hours a day, housed in ‘pods’ of 8 cells, 4 on top and 4 on bottom. All cells face a blank wall. They cannot see each other. It is rarely quiet although talking is technically prohibited. The men may buy a TV or a radio and have up to six cubic feet of personal property. They may send and receive mail (unless they have broken a rule). Some mail is censored. Unlike every other state, they may have a short phone call only after a close family death. Indigent prisoners have little.

Family visits are limited to a few hours per week. They are conducted on a telephone behind glass. SHU prisons are remote, making visits costly and difficult. Many go without visits for decades.