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ICE Subjected 10,500+ People to Solitary Confinement over 14 Months as the Cruel Practice Surges: Report

Study documents unprecedented scale of solitary confinement by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Under Trump administration, rates of solitary confinement placements increasing

September 17, 2025 | Asylum, United States

ICE placed at least 10,588 people in solitary confinement from April 2024-May 2025 and solitary confinement rates are surging under the Trump administration, according to a new **report** published today by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the Peeler Immigration Lab,

and experts the United States confinement

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“Solitary confinement placements lasting longer than 15 days meet international criteria for torture. But during the final months of the Biden administration and amid the Trump administration’s escalating attacks on immigrants, ICE’s own records show that the agency has subjected people to these torturous conditions – which cause devastating physical and psychological health harms,” said **Katherine Peeler, MD**, a report co-author, medical advisor at PHR, and assistant professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School.


“Our report is likely just the tip of the iceberg as it relies in part on ICE’s self-reported data, which is known to be incomplete and unreliable,” said **Arevik Avedian, PhD**, a report co-author, lecturer on law and director of Empirical Research Services at Harvard Law School. “The full scale and scope of the solitary confinement crisis will continue to be obscured by ICE until Congress acts.”

The report is authored by PHR, the Peeler Immigration Lab, and experts from Harvard Law School’s Empirical Research Services and the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program, in a follow-up to their 2024 *Endless Nightmare: Solitary Confinement in U.S. Immigration Detention* report.

The **new study** provides national-level data as well as a regional case study on abusive practices in... obtained through...

National findings

- Over a span of **at least 10,500** centers across the country
- During the Biden administration, **monthly** between 2019 and 2021
- **Biden administration**
- From February 2021 to February 2022, ICE **increased**

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- The number of vulnerable people (such as those with mental health conditions) subjected to solitary confinement increased by an average of **approximately 56 percent per quarter in 2025** compared to 2022, when ICE began reporting statistics on the solitary confinement of vulnerable populations.
- During the first three months of 2025, solitary confinement placements involving people with vulnerabilities **lasted more than twice as long as they did in the first fiscal quarter of 2022.**


New England regional specific findings include:

- Systemic use of solitary confinement for seemingly **arbitrary and retaliatory purposes – in violation of international and domestic laws – including punishing people for filing grievances, requesting basic needs like showers, or sharing food.**
- From 2018 and 2023, nearly **three out of four solitary confinement placements lasted 15-days or longer, the threshold that UN human rights experts consider to be torture.** On average, people spent about a month in solitary, and some were isolated for more than a year.
- Among the approximately 60 percent of solitary confinement placements where mental health status was recorded in New England, **nearly half involved individuals with**

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The report calls on the federal government to end solitary confinement practices against immigrants in ICE detention. Members of Congress should utilize all available oversight mechanisms and legislative tools at their disposal to curtail any abusive use of solitary confinement. States should also conduct rigorous independent oversight, exercise every available power, and pass necessary legislation to reduce or eliminate solitary confinement within their jurisdictions.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is a New York-based advocacy organization that uses science and medicine to prevent mass atrocities and severe human rights violations. [Learn more here.](#)

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