

The following is a brief summary of a document entitled COMPLAINT Regarding Human Rights Violations at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility filed to Amnesty International by prisoners incarcerated in the Administrative Control Unit of this facility in Lucasville, Ohio. This thirty-page document is filled with specific accounts of severe and blatant violations of basic human rights. The document speaks for itself.

Dear Amnesty International:

At the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility prisoners are being systematically victimized by some of the most barbaric and inhumane methods ever devised by man. Amazingly, these attacks and human rights violations are not perpetrated on us by Ohio prison officials to make us good citizens upon our eventual release from prison to free society but to exert total control over our minds and bodies in an all-out effort to make us good prisoners. A "good prisoner" is a person who only feels what prison officials tell him to feel, only thinks, what prison officials tell him to think, and only wants what prison officials are willing to give him. By contrast, the prisoner who feels a whole range of normal emotions, thinks for himself, and wants more out of life than what prison has to offer him is in danger of being subjected to a series of aversive treatments to eradicate such conduct. Those aversive treatments have led to a dramatic increase in suicides, self-mutilations and mental breakdowns in the Administrative Control Unit, Disciplinary Control Unit, and Death Row at the prison. In is in these status of the prison where men are being literally tortured by Ohio prison officials.

The Administrative Control Unit consists of 3 different cell blocks in the prison's J complex, J1, J3, and J4 cell blocks. It is in this area and these cell blocks that the human rights violations are occurring. Our complaint necessarily begins here.

J1 Super Max is the most repressive cell block in the entire Ohio penal system. It is a small cell block with only 20 cells, which are situated 5 cells to a range with 4 ranges. Five of these cells are sensory deprivation "boxcar" cells which are completely enclosed by 3 walls and a solid steel front with only a small hatch which is opened only to give a prisoner his paper plate of food 3 times each day.

J1 Super Max houses Ohio's execution chamber and electric chair.

Prisoners are placed in J1 Super Max for indefinite periods of periods for punishment. One prisoner, Tim Reed, spent 11 consecutive years confined in J1. Other prisoners have spent several consecutive years confined in J1, e.g., Kelly Chapman, James King, Wayne Rainy, David Lovejoy, Don Nickerson and John Perotti.

Prisoners confined in J1 Super Max are confined in small cells 24 hours a day, except for a 10-minute shower twice a week, and are not permitted to work, go to church, or take part in any vocational, educational, counseling, or recreational programs.

Prisoners confined in J1 Super Max are not permitted to receive or possess newspapers or magazines, radio or televisions, watches or clocks, nor even a calendar. Thus, a prisoner confined in J1 never knows what's going on in the real world and soon forgets there is a real world; he never knows what time it is and measures time by events (such as shift change, supper time, etc.) rather than events by time and never knows what month, date, and day it is.

Prisoners in J1 Super Max are not afforded any exercise, fresh air, or sunshine for months and years at a time which has a harmful and debilitating effect on the mental and physical well-being of prisoners.

All cells in J1 Super Max are inadequately lighted by a 50-watt light bulb recessed 5 inches inside the back wall of each cell and covered with a steel plate with 25 small holes for light to come through and illuminate the whole cell. This lighting is so poor it is impossible to ascertain colors, textures, or read a normal or small print book. Such poor lighting is causing serious irreparable damage to prisoners' eyes.

Prison officials manipulate the temperature in J1 Super Max as a stimulus to bring about a specific response from J1 prisoners. the heat is either turned all the way off in the winter with cold air blowing out of the vents in the cells so prisoners will be forced to stay in bed and covered up in order to be warm, or turned on full blast so that it is so hot and uncomfortable in the cells that its hard to breathe and impossible to sleep so prisoners will become irritable and argue with each other.

In addition to living in the conditions, and being subjected to the policies and procedures set out above, prisoners confined in J1 Super Max have been the victims of such inhumane and barbaric acts at the hands of prison officials as being chained to cell fixtures in locked cell for hours at a time for punishment; being knocked down and having all legal material and letters destroyed by guards using high-pressure (300 lbs. of pressure) fire hoses on prisoners who are locked in their cells as punishment; being attacked by guards while locked in a cell with chemical mace and tear gas as punishment for making noise; being kept in cells after they have been saturated with chemical mace and tear gas for up to 10 days and forcing prisoners to sleep on concrete floors with all windows opened in the winter time as punishment; being brutally beaten by guards while the prisoners' hands are cuffed behind his back and his feet are shackled with leg irons by sadistic guards as punishment.

Specifically, in support of these allegations, the following incidents are provided:

On December 24th, 1987 Harold E. Carter, Sgt. Richard Taylor, and several regular guards put handcuffs on Eric "Sudan" Swofford's wrists and attached them to a chain around his waist and locked in the back with a padlock and then put leg irons on his ankles, ran a heavy log chain through the leg irons and around one leg of his cell bunk (which is bolted to the concrete floor) and then locked the chain together with another padlock. Prison officials then left his cell and locked the cell door leaving Swofford chained to the cell fixture. Alonzo "Sonny" Taylor was done the same way, by the same prison official at the same time as Swofford, but in a different cell. Swofford and Taylor were both chained to cell fixtures in sensory deprivation, or "boxcar" cells. Swofford fell down and injured his neck while attempting to use the toilet in his shackles. He laid on the cold concrete floor of his cell, still shackled, moaning in pain for over a half hour before nurses came and put him on a stretcher and admitted him to the prison hospital in a neck brace for over a week. He still has pain in his right arm and numbness in the fingers of his right hand and has been scheduled to be examined by a neurosurgeon. Taylor remained shackled to the fixture in cell his cell for over 9 consecutive hours, during which time he was not fed by prison officials and could not use the toilet or get a drink of water.

In July of 1984 John W. Perotti was taken out of J1 cell block to either see a doctor or some prison committee. Perotti's hands were handcuffed behind his back and his feet were bound by leg irons. Captain Oscar McGraw, Sgt. Jeffrey Walmsley, and Lt. Randolph C. Halcomb were escorting Perotti and began verbally abusing, taunting, and calling him obscene names. Perotti spit in Carty's face and Carty pulled his wooden billy club and drew it all the way back over his head with both hands and looked at his superiors. Captain McGraw nodded his head and Carty hit Perotti in the top of his head with the club splitting his head wide open. Blood was everywhere. Prison Paramedic, Nancy Shaw, was called to J1 to examine John Perotti's head wound and she said his head needed to be sewed up. However, John Perotti was never seen again or treated by a nurse or doctor. Instead, he tied torn sheets and rags around his head until the wound eventually healed. Par for the course, the prison's Use of Force Committee that allegedly investigated this incident found Carty's use of force on Perotti to be warranted and reasonable. Carty told the Use of Force Committee that Perotti was trying to butt him with his head with his hands cuffed behind his back, leg irons on his ankles, and 3 other prison officials holding him.

On February 14th, 1988, James C. Armstrong pulled out the high pressure fire hose on the south side of J1 Super Max and sprayed John W. Byrd and his legal material with it while Byrd was locked inside his cell. At the same time Armstrong sprayed Byrd with the fire hose he also got Dennis M. Wolfel with it. Byrd and Wolfel were in cells side by side each other. Approximately 15 minutes after Armstrong sprayed Byrd and Wolf with the high-pressure fire hose, Sgt. Larry R. Turner, Sgt. Ronald Arnett, and guards James Sparks, B. R. Skaggs, S. T. Crabtree, and Darrell J. Logan came into J1 cell block wearing gas masks and carrying shields. These individuals are known throughout the prison as the "goon squad" of "A team" these individuals went to John Byrd's cell, put solid shields over his cell bars so that no air would come into the cell, and began spraying M-9 Chemical Mace into his cell. Dennis Wolfel was right next door to Byrd and is allergic to chemical mace and tear gas. He verbally objected to the macing of John Byrd and Sgt. Turner then stepped over in front of Wolfel's cell and sprayed him with chemical mace. Sgt. Turner and his "goon squad" then lobbed a teargas grenade into John Byrd's cell and he was coughing. Wolfel told Sgt. Turner to get Byrd out of the cell before they killed him. Sgt. Turner then sprayed chemical mace on Wolfel a second time. Wolfel continued to tell the goon squad they were going to kill Byrd and Sgt. Turner sprayed him with chemical mace a third time. After the third time and Sgt. Turner went back to Byrd's cell, Darrell Logan, a guard on the goon squad, stepped in front of Wolfel's cell with the high pressure fire hose; Wolfel attempted to run to a corner of his cell to avoid a direct hit from the fire hose but Logan got him, hitting Wolfel in the chest area with such force and impact that it knocked Wolfel down, causing him to strike his head against a cell wall and injure his neck and back. As Wolfel lay on the wet floor of his cell injured and in pain, Logan continued to spray him and his legal material and letters with the fire hose for a good 7-8 minutes more. When fellow prisoners Jay D. Scott and Eric Swofford verbally protested this conduct by Logan, Logan turned his fire hose on Jay D. Scott while another unknown guard dragged the other fire hose over to the south side of J1 from the north side and began spraying Eric Swofford with it.

This very brief summary does not do justice to the content of the document or to the cause of Lucasville prisoners. This document in its entirety and countless other papers, journals, and pamphlets are available for you to read. We urge you to educate yourself now.