

# Connecticut prisons fail to live up to the minimum human rights standards set by the Mandela Rules



The United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, or the "Nelson Mandela Rules," outline baseline practices for a state to comply with the "obligation to treat all prisoners with respect for their inherent dignity and value as human beings, and to prohibit torture and other forms of ill-treatment" of persons in corrections. Is Connecticut complying?

**According to the Mandela Rules, solitary confinement should only be used in exceptional cases, as a last resort, for as short a time as possible, after authorization by a competent authority, and subject to independent review. Prolonged isolation of 15 days or more is prohibited entirely. Solitary is defined as confinement for 22 hours per day without "meaningful human contact." (Rules 43-46).**

**Connecticut's policy and practice routinely violates the Mandela Rules on Solitary Confinement.** Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 21-1 cynically fixated on the 22 hours per day guideline and claimed to end torture in our prisons. However, numerous loopholes permit the use of isolation under lockdowns and for people on "disciplinary statuses." Meanwhile, DOC is providing no therapeutic programs or other resources to address the reasons why people end up isolation to begin with. The end result is that solitary confinement is still disturbingly common.

**According to the Mandela Rules, use of restraints is only legitimate if no lesser form of controlling an actual risk is available. They must be removed as soon as possible. Restraints that are inherently degrading or painful are entirely prohibited. (Rules 43, 47-49).**

**Connecticut's policy and practice routinely violates the Mandela Rules on Restraints.** Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 21-1 places no limits on the use of restraints. DOC's implementing policies do not place real limits but merely provide extra layers of review. Reports indicate that painful and degrading restraints continue to be used in retaliation for violating prison rules and in response to mental health crises, including self-harm.

**According to the Mandela Rules, there should be no discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status. (Rule 2).**

**Connecticut's policy and practice routinely violates the Mandela Rule on non-discrimination.** Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 21-1 does not address discrimination. Evidence suggests, and reports by persons of color and LGBT individuals corroborate, that such populations are often subject to discriminatory harassment and actions by correctional staff and fellow inmates. For example, according to DOC's own records obtained through Freedom of Information Requests, in 2020 and 2021, 80% of reported uses of in-cell restraints were deployed against persons of color.

**According to the Mandela Rules, independent oversight with inspection and investigative powers and duties are essential to ensure prisons' compliance with the law and regulations and to safeguard the rights of people in prisons. (Rules 57, 71, 83-85).**

**Connecticut violates the Mandela Rule on oversight.** Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 21-1 does not address oversight. Connecticut only has an ombudsperson to monitor treatment of minors in Connecticut prisons. Connecticut lacks necessary independent, civilian oversight of its prisons.

**CONNECTICUT MUST DO BETTER.  
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