



# THE EDGE OF ENDURANCE

PRISON CONDITIONS IN  
CALIFORNIA'S SECURITY  
HOUSING UNITS

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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*Cover photo:* A corridor inside the Security Housing Unit at Pelican Bay State Prison, California, USA, August 2011.  
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WHETHER IN A HIGH-PROFILE CONFLICT OR A FORGOTTEN CORNER OF THE GLOBE, **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL** CAMPAIGNS FOR JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND DIGNITY FOR ALL AND SEEKS TO GALVANIZE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

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# **THE EDGE OF ENDURANCE**

## **PRISON CONDITIONS IN CALIFORNIA'S SECURITY HOUSING UNITS**

Hundreds of prisoners have been confined in California's high-security segregation units (SHUs) for 10 or more years – in some cases for decades – in conditions of severe isolation and reduced sensory stimulation.

This report describes Amnesty International's concerns about these conditions and includes findings of a research visit to three SHU units in November 2011. It also examines recent proposals put forward by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to reform the method for assigning prisoners to the units and to provide a route out of SHUs through a protracted four-step process lasting at least four years.

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