

LIVING CONDITIONS INSIDE WESTERN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE & OTHER PRISONS

ANONYMOUS

In this essay, the author describes the inadequacy of certain conditions in the facility in which they are housed, arguing that these deprivations amount to a violation of their Eighth Amendment rights.

The prisoners here at Western Correctional Institute have suffered extensively under the authority of the prison staff. It has amounted to “cruel and unusual punishment” under the Eighth Amendment. I will explain why.

It’s stated that “*Some conditions of confinement may establish an Eighth Amendment violation ‘in combination’ when each would not do so alone, but only when they have a mutually enforcing effect that produces the deprivation of a single, identifiable human need such as food, warmth, or exercise . . .*”¹

For nearly two years, the prisoners here at WCI have been confined to our cells. For many months we were permitted only half an hour out of our cell; today it’s only two hours. Within these two hours one must: take a shower, make a phone call, and do any other necessary business. There are only five phones and each phone call is limited to only 30 minutes; before making another call one has to wait 15 minutes. One (through no fault of his own) is forced to remain in a small space 22 hours every day. There have been many, many scientific studies that conclude anyone subjected to these conditions eventually starts to break down mentally.²

Even more, us prisoners are only allowed one day per week for library. The library session is for 30-45 minutes. The prison staff here now have started a new policy – we now have to make a formal request to visit the library all together.

Personally, I’ve been trying to petition the court to explain that my Speedy Trial right was violated. My Speedy Trial right has been violated since 2010. The Circuit Court never arraigned me. I never had my constitutional rights explained to me and I never entered a plea. Because of the many forced hours in my cell and the inadequate time allowed in the library, I have not been able to argue my case effectively.

The staff here at WCI are indeed violating us prisoners’ Eighth Amendment constitutional rights, because of the lack of exercise and time spent outside our cells. For instance, there is a large body of prisoners who are now obese and developed hyperglycemia. Some have even died due to lack of exercise. The time we have to spend in the library to work on our cases is little to none. These are just some of the ways the WCI staff are violating our constitutional rights, including that against cruel and unusual punishment.

¹ Wilson v. Seiter, 501 U.S. 294, 304 (1991).

² See, e.g., Thomas Stephenson, Jane Leaman, Éamonn O’Moore, Anh Tran, & Emma Plugge, *Time Out of Cell and Time in Purposeful Activity and Adverse Mental Health Outcomes Amongst People in Prison: A Literature Review*, 17 INT. J. PRISON HEALTH 54 (2021).