

Meinrad Kopp  
Reg-No. 68931-018  
United States Penitentiary Tucson  
P.O. Box 24550  
Tucson, AZ 85734

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American Prison Writing  
Hamilton College  
198 College Hill Road  
Clinton, NY 13323-1218  
United States

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is Meinrad Kopp. I am a German national and a German citizen who has been entrapped by a Department of Homeland Security Undercover Agent while I was living in Switzerland in my Swiss domicile. I am currently incarcerated in the United States, serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole that was imposed on me by the sentencing judge Paul G. Byron in December 2017 in the Federal Court of Orlando, Florida. I was given the life sentence after signing a plea agreement that promised me a sentence not exceeding 20 years, and despite a sentencing guideline of 78-96 months. Since January 2018 I am now an inmate at United States Penitentiary Tucson and I'd like to share my prison experiences with you in an ongoing fashion. Today I'd like to report about collective punishment through lockdowns.

On May 25, 2021 an institution wide lockdown was issued that lasted until June 1st following an alleged fight between two inmates that had happened in one of the ten housing units. At first, it was unknown why the lockdown was imposed, if it was a punitive or an administrative lockdown, and for how long it would last. There is usually no transparency about this. The nature of the lockdown became obvious when the first meal was served. As soon as box meals, usually bologna sandwiches (or peanut butter sandwiches) it became clear that the nature of the lockdown was punitive. At this point, 99.5% of all inmates were unaware of what had happened and why they were locked down. Almost none of the inmate with the possible exception of a few had witnessed what had happened, let alone were they involved in it or played any other active role. On the next day, around noon time, the Complex Warden, Ms. Howard, issued an inmate bulletin that explained the incident and why we were locked in our cells 24/7.

USP Tucson houses about 1,400 inmates. Everybody now was faced with a punishment for something that almost all of the inmates had not witnessed, were not involved, and did not even have a knowledge of. It should therefore be allowed to ask the question: "Why I am being punished?" Why are 1,400 inmates being locked for seven days for the wrongdoing of two or a few? What is the correctional objective of such collective punishment? Why is everybody punished and not the culprits only? Is there a penal justification for doing so, and if yes,



what is it? Asking these questions should be perfectly legitimate and they should deserve a serious answer.

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the so-called Nelson Mandela Rules, approved in 1957 and re-approved in 2015, explicitly state (in the section related to Restrictions, Discipline, and Sanctions:

"The following practices, in particular, shall be prohibited: Indefinite solitary confinement, prolonged solitary confinement, placement of a prisoner in a dark or constantly lit cell, corporal punishment of a prisoner, or the reduction of a prisoners diet or drinking water, or collective punishment."

What would a reasonable person call a lock down of 1,400 men for seven days for an alleged misconduct of 1 or 2 others whom they don't know, whom they have possibly never seen, and in which they were not involved? I can not think of any reason than collective punishment that is clearly outlawed by the United Nations. What else than an unreasonable and counterproductive punishment does such an action constitute? However, as shocking as this may be, this is not an extraordinary measure, it is more a day to day practice and it is happening on many levels. Such "correctional actions" create nothing but anger and frustration and they lead to very little rehabilitation, but rather to more aggression. The Tucson prison does have a whole range of psychologists and they should be perfectly able to explain to the prison leadership that punitive lock downs do not achieve their purpose when they are imposed non-discriminately on everybody. Prison officials should know that such measures only fuel the cycle of aggression rather than stopping it.

In addition the question must be asked: "Why is the Bureau of Prisons constantly and methodically violating the Rules of the United Nations on the treatment of prisoners? And one should take into account that these rules only describe Standard Minimum Rules!

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Respectfully submitted,

Meinrad Kopp