



For informational Purposes
October 2013

(916) 445-4950

Background: Hunger Strikes in California Prisons

July 2011

- Inmates at Pelican Bay State Prison's Security Housing Unit (SHU) initiated the first mass hunger strike on July 1, 2011.
- Approximately 5,300 inmates in nine prisons began refusing state-issued meals. The number of inmate peaked at more than 6,500 two days later and then gradually decreased until the strike concluded on July 20, 2011.
- Inmates stopped the strike after Pelican Bay strike leaders better understood the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) plans already in progress to review and change policies regarding SHU confinement and gang management.

September, 2011

- The second mass hunger strike began September 26, 2011, and after three days, 4,252 inmates in eight state prisons had missed in nine consecutive meals – the point at which CDCR considers an inmate to be on a hunger strike.
- By October 13, 2011, the number of inmates participating had dropped to 580 in three state prisons.
- CDCR officials in Sacramento were contacted by Pelican Bay State Prison inmates by letter on October 11, 2011. It was the first such contact by inmates or their representatives during this second inmate-led action. Officials agreed to meet with inmate representatives to discuss CDCR's ongoing review of and revisions to its SHU policies. Similar to the discussions with inmates during the July 2011, hunger strike, all agreed the changes to policies would take several months to finalize.
- Most inmates, including all of those who identified themselves as leaders of the strike, resumed eating on October 13, 2011. All remaining inmates had resumed eating by Sunday, October 16, 2011.

July, 2013

- On July 8, 2013, more than 30,000 inmates refused to eat state-issued food. By July 11, 2013, 12,421 inmates in 24 state prisons and four out-of-state contract facilities had



missed nine consecutive meals, the point at which CDCR considers an inmate to be on a hunger strike.

- Of the more than 30,000 inmates who refused to eat state-issued food on July 8, only 2,377 were unaffiliated with a gang.
- In addition, 1,336 inmates refused to participate in their work assignments or attend educational classes. By July 24, there were no inmates engaging in a work stoppage.
- By September 4, 2013, there were 100 inmates in two prisons on a hunger strike; 40 of them had been on a hunger strike continuously since July 8.
- All remaining hunger strikers resumed eating on September 5, 2013.

Additional Resources

CDCR's responses to the hunger strikers' five core demands from 2011 and their 40 supplemental demands made in 2013 can be found here:

<http://cdcrtoday.blogspot.com/2013/08/cdcrs-responses-to-hunger-strikers.html>

Information about CDCR's Security Threat Group policy and pilot can be found here:

<http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/stg/>

###