

Human Rights Watch Says Mentally Ill Inmates Abused at U.S. Prisons



New York, May 14 (RHC)-- Prisoners with mental disabilities across the United States experience unnecessary, excessive, and even malicious force by prison staff, according to a new report by an international human rights organization.

Jail and prison guards inflict mentally ill prisoners with painful chemical sprays, shocked them with powerful electric stun weapons, and strapped them for days in restraining chairs or beds, Human Rights Watch charged in a report issued in New York.

The 127-page report -- "Callous and Cruel: Use of Force against Inmates with Mental Disabilities in U.S. Jails and Prisons" -- details incidents in which staff have broken prisoners' jaws, noses, ribs; left them with lacerations requiring stitches, second-degree burns, deep bruises, and damaged internal organs.

In some cases, the force used has led to their death, the New York City-based rights group said. "Jails and prisons can be dangerous, damaging, and even deadly places for men and women with mental health problems," said Jamie Fellner, U.S. program senior adviser at Human Rights Watch and the author of the report. "Force is used against prisoners even when, because of their illness, they cannot

understand or comply with staff orders.”

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