

MDRI Releases Report on Atrocious Conditions in Argentina's Mental Health System

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Argentina is among countries with the most psychiatrists *per capita* in the world - yet people detained in the country's public psychiatric institutions are subject to serious human rights violations. *Ruined Lives*, an investigative report released today by Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) and the Argentine human rights organization Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), finds that 25,000 people are locked away in Argentina's institutions, segregated from society, many for a lifetime and with no possibility of ever getting out.

Ruined Lives exposes widespread abuse and neglect in these institutions, including people burning to death in isolation cells, complete sensory deprivation in long-term isolation, forced sterilization and sexual and physical abuse. In one psychiatric penal ward in Buenos Aires, men were locked naked in tiny, barren isolation cells with no light or ventilation for months at a time. At another institution, four people died while locked in isolation cells. Toilets overflowed with excrement and floors were flooded with urine.

Investigators found a 16 year-old boy in a crib, his arms and legs tied to his body with strips of cloth, completely immobilized. Staff said he had been tied up since being admitted to the institution more than a year before.

"Argentina's mental health system detains people on a massive scale without any legal protections," said Eric Rosenthal, MDRI's Executive Director. "The inhumane and degrading treatment we observed is banned by international human rights treaties and should not be tolerated in any society."