

# "Modern-Day Lepers" #1

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Today's society is at unrest, preoccupied with sex offenders in their neighborhood. The typical solution is GPS tracking bracelets, protective buffer zones, and a barrage of restrictions augmented to stringent terms of parole or probation.

But how does it really work?

Human Rights Watch, a leading international group, released a two year study in September '07 that was the first comprehensive study of sex offender policies in the U.S. Its findings indicate that many state laws enacted in the past 30 years targeting sex offenders violate their constitutional rights. This is in part due to the inclusion of individuals on the public Sex-Offender Registry with a broad range of offenses.

Jamie Fell, director of a U.S program of HRW, says, "These are laws that weren't based on reason."

An HRW report called for a repeal of laws restricting where sex offenders can live, and for curbs on access to online registries originally intended for law enforcement and professional use ONLY. Yet the site remains public and sex offenders continue to be ousted and curtailed, leaving those who have paid their debt(s) to society vulnerable to harassment and violence—as was the case in Maine in 2006, where a man murdered two sex offenders whose names he lifted from the registry database.

By the same token, this may actually be endangering society because the effects of Unconstitutional restrictions placed on sex offenders may increase the likelihood of noncompliance, and thus, recidivism.

For instance: What happens when an individual released from prison cannot obtain employment, housing, or is confronted with ostracism from the public due to stigma? Answer: He's apt not to register, or maybe run to another state where he'll attempt changing his name.

Worse yet, he may also resort to crime to support him or herself, or if that individual is detached from society and its rules of conduct, he may become a serious danger to society or children. He's apt not to care, since he will see no future and society as his enemy.

This is what happens when our Constitution is sidestepped and as a society we fail to honor its precepts and our founders' wisdom. In the long run, society may have to admit that iron-fist treatment for our modern-day lepers just doesn't work.