

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/justice-department-report-criticizes-mistreatment-women-tutwiler-prison-alabama/>

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In a report released on Friday, the Justice Department criticized Alabamas Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, where female prisoners who report sexual abuse and misconduct routinely have been placed in segregation, stripped of their property, denied contact with their families, and forced to submit to unwanted medical procedures.

Consultants with the National Institute of Corrections who interviewed former Tutwiler Warden Frank Albright, prison staff, and inmates last year observed in their report that women and staff report that Tutwiler is a repressive and intimidating environment. Inmates reported being in fear of retaliation from staff if they reject staffs sexual advances. Additionally, they report that they feel that they cannot bring their complaints to the administration, as they will be locked down if they annoy or anger some administrators and staff.

The report also says the prison is dirty and overcrowded, staff are inadequately trained, and prison officials had failed to remedy conditions, such as offices with closed blinds where misconduct can take place unobserved, that contribute to the widespread sexual abuse of women prisoners by male guards.

The Alabama Department of Corrections requested the NIC assessment last year after [EJI filed a complaint with the Justice Department](#) calling for a swift and thorough federal investigation into widespread sexual abuse of women prisoners by male guards at Tutwiler. In interviews with more than 50 women incarcerated at Tutwiler, EJI had uncovered evidence of frequent and severe officer-on-inmate sexual violence. The Department of Justice has now launched a formal investigation into conditions at Tutwiler.

EJI Director Bryan Stevenson said the study reveals the problems that persist at Tutwiler and makes clear that a long-term solution is needed. You cant excuse or ignore violence, by staff, directed at prisoners, Stevenson said. You cant justify it. You cant excuse it. You have to address it.

At a news conference on Friday, Corrections Commissioner Kim Thomas said officials had stopped putting prisoners in solitary confinement for filing a complaint against an officer. Chairman of the state legislatures prison oversight committee, Republican Senator Cam Ward of Alabaster, said if something is not done to resolve the problems identified at Tutwiler it would lead to court challenges down the road. The oversight committee will meet today to address the NIC report.

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National Institute on Corrections Report on Tutwiler Prison for Women

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