

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/montgomery-advertiser-joins-eji-call-for-prison-leadership-change/>

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10.23.14

The Montgomery Advertiser this week joined EJI in calling for the removal of St. Clair Correctional Facility Warden Carter Davenport and demanding that the cauldron of violence at St. Clair and elsewhere must be addressed now.

In an editorial entitled Confront Prison Violence, the Advertiser wrote that, despite Republican state leaders agreement last year to address the problem of prisoner abuse immediately, mistreatment has been allowed to continue and worsen.

As the latest indication of state officials failure to address violence and abuse in Alabamas prisons, the paper pointed to the [federal lawsuit](#) filed last week by EJI, which cited the appallingly dangerous conditions and high rates of violence at St. Clair, including:

Six homicides at St. Clair in the past three years, including three in 2014.

A worsening homicide rate, which has leapt from 75.6 per 100,000 prisoners in 2012 to 232.4 per 100,000 in 2014, according to the Equal Justice Initiative. The national average in state prisons is 5.4 homicides per 100,000, making St. Clair a deadly place indeed.

A high rate of stabbings, serious assaults and fights that indicates failure of supervision.

Allegations high-ranking officers engage in violent abuse of inmates, including one case in which a prisoner was punched and badly injured while handcuffed, requiring multiple treatments and surgeries.

Security blunders such as broken locks on cell doors, putting inmates and officers at risk.

In April 2014, EJI shared its troubling findings with Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner (ADOC) Kim Thomas and asked him to investigate the escalating violence at St. Clair under the leadership of Warden Carter Davenport. In June 2014, after another prisoner was murdered at St. Clair, EJI renewed its [formal request](#) for the immediate removal of Warden Davenport.

We agree Davenport, who has a tainted history of having hit a handcuffed prisoner, should go, the Advertiser wrote on Monday. Problems at the top work their way down, and strong new leadership is quickly needed at the prison.

The paper also called for an independent investigation to determine if other officials abetted the climate of violence and should also be removed. Stronger action is also warranted to address sexual abuse of inmates and misconduct by officers at [Tutwiler Prison for Women](#) in Wetumpka, Alabama.

While efforts to end pervasive and likely illegal overcrowding in Alabamas prisons is commendable, the editorial board insisted that the violence at St. Clair and in other prisons throughout the state must be addressed now, not two, five or 10 years down the road.

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