

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/alabama-prison-population-rising-dramatically/>

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07.10.19

As violence continues to plague the states prisons, new data from the Alabama Department of Corrections shows that the department is rapidly erasing much-needed reductions in the prison population. The prison population declined 3.6 percent last year, but that progress has been almost completely reversed in the first half of this fiscal year as the population rose 3.3 percent (an increase of 890 people) between last October and this April.

Admissions to ADOC custody for the current fiscal year are 9.5 percent higher (8332 people) than the same time last year (7607). And while admissions are climbing, releases have plummeted to 1.4 percent fewer so far this year (7704) than the same time last year (8698).

This dramatic rise in Alabama's prison population coincides with changes in parole policy last fall. Since October, 37.2 percent fewer people have been paroled (1482 people) than were paroled by the same time last year (2360).

The rise in admissions and increasing limits on parole mean Alabama will experience a growth in the prison population that will add new challenges to the existing [crisis in conditions](#) in the states prisons. The data also undermines prison officials' assertions that sentencing reforms are lowering the incarcerated population and easing overcrowding in the states prisons.

Alabama's extraordinary prison homicide rate has already reached new crisis levels this year, with eight homicides in the first six months of 2019. Alabama had 10 homicides in 2018; 11 in 2017; 3 in 2016; and 8 in 2015.

The unprecedented level of violence, including sexual and lethal violence, that has plagued the states prisons for the last five years was the subject of a scathing [findings letter](#) issued by the Department of Justice this spring, and it has only gotten worse.

Since the Justice Department report was released on April 2, two incarcerated people have been killed in medium-security facilities. Joseph Holloway was serving a 40-year sentence for robbery when he was stabbed to death on June 5, 2019, at Staton Correctional Facility in Elmore, Alabama. Jeremy Bailey was serving a 7-year sentence for a drug conviction when he was stabbed to death 10 days later at Fountain Correctional Facility in Atmore.

Violence at St. Clair Correctional Facility in Springville has also continued unchecked. During Memorial Day weekend, unconfiscated weapons and drugs, combined with staff failure to regulate prisoner movement, resulted in the stabbing of four men by a single armed and intoxicated incarcerated man. One of the victims was classified as minimum-out custody, had been in prison less than three months, and had repeatedly sought protection, notifying officials in the days before he was attacked that he was at risk in the housing unit and feared for his life.

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