

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/another-stabbing-homicide-in-alabama-prison/>

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Updated 10.06.20

EJI has received multiple reports that a man incarcerated at Fountain Correctional Facility in Atmore, Alabama, died after being stabbed on September 29. Demarcus Harrison, a 46-year-old African American man, was reportedly stabbed in a prison dormitory. Mr. Harrison was serving a life-with-parole sentence for robbery.

Mr. Harrison is the second person killed at Fountain this year, and is at least the 20th person murdered in an Alabama prison since the U.S. Department of Justice [informed](#) Alabama officials that the states prison system routinely violates the constitutional rights of prisoners by failing to protect them from rampant violence and sexual abuse.

Additionally, the Alabama Department of Corrections lack of transparency and the absence of meaningful oversight result in many suspicious deaths in custody going unreported or being incorrectly classified. The sustained homicide rate in Alabama prisons over the past five years is [unparalleled](#) in the U.S. prison system.

Related Article

Alabama's prison homicide rate is more than 600% greater than the national average.

Many of the reported homicides involved a stabbing or the use of a contraband knife or knife-like weapon. The inability to provide security within Alabama prisons, along with high homicide and assault rates, has made an already violent situation worse as many imprisoned people feel the need to secure weapons.

ADOC reported it found 2,800 weapons, or approximately 312 weapons per 1,000 people, in sweeps at seven prisons last year. The number of weapons in Alabamas prisons is much higher than in other Southern states. Last year Louisiana reported that it recovered 14 knives per 1,000 prisoners over the entire year, while Tennessee and Georgia recovered fewer than 80 per 1,000 prisoners.

In April 2019, the Justice Department found that shift commanders at multiple Alabama facilities estimated that 50-75% of prisoners had weapons, and most prisoners felt like a knife was necessary for self-defense. This has fueled the high homicide rate, with 32 of the 56 recorded homicides over the past five years caused by stabbings.

Experts stress that most incarcerated people dont want to live in weaponized environments where every conflict has the potential to be lethal and are calling on the state to provide secure environments where weapons are not needed.

Update: A day after this was posted by EJI, the Alabama Department of Corrections confirmed that Mr. Harrisons death was a homicide.

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