

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/suicide-not-justice-death-ariel-castro>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Lets start by acknowledging what nearly everyone already knows. **Ariel Castro was convicted of heinous crimes for which he [deserved to be punished](#).** With that in mind, his suicide just one month into his sentence does not fill the public with a great deal of grief.

[But it was not justice.](#)

Looking beyond the visceral reaction we have toward Castro and his crimes, it becomes obvious that **suicide in prison is a serious problem**, a problem much bigger than any one inmate.

Castros suicide is the [seventh this year](#) in Ohio prisons and **the 33rd suicide since 2008**. In local jails the problem is even worse. A 2005 study found that suicide accounted for [32 percent of all jail deaths](#). Nationwide, suicide kills more inmates than [homicides, drug overdoses, and accidents combined](#).

Numbers that high are a problem.

As numerous media outlets [have pointed out](#), the call for an investigation into Castros suicide is really a call to [ask the hard questions](#) about how we administer our jails and prisons. Because **regardless of how you feel about these people taking their own lives, it is clear that its not supposed to be happening while they are in government custody.**

When a person is imprisoned, the criminal justice system takes on a basic responsibility to see that justice is administered in accordance with the law.

Not vigilante revenge. Not self-administered judgment. **Justice.**

Like homicides, overdoses and accidents, it isnt always easy for jails or prisons to prevent suicides, but it is very important that they do everything they possibly can to try. **Anything less creates a breakdown**, and a broken system will eventually become just as dangerous for guards and administrators as it is for inmates.

Some may be content to write off suicide the way they write off other prison problems like gang activity, drug trafficking, and rampant sexual abuse. After all, they affect a population for which many dont feel any sympathy.

But our system is not about sympathy, or anger, or any other emotion. **Its about justicea concept based on the rule of law.**

A case like Ariel Castros may inflame our emotions, but deep down we know we are a nation of laws, and that those laws must be administered to the absolute best of our ability, regardless of how we feel about the people who break them.

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