

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/two-more-people-killed-in-alabama-prisons/>

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03.18.19

The Alabama prison crisis continues to take a deadly toll with more prison homicides. Two men were killed last week at Bibb Correctional Facility near Brent, Alabama. Quinton Ashaad Few was fatally stabbed on Tuesday, March 12. Ray Anthony Little, 56, was fatally stabbed on Friday, March 16.

These two prison homicides bring the total number of prison murders in the past year to 13, which is more than 12 times the national average as reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. This is a 34 percent increase over Alabama's already high rate of homicides the previous year.

The two homicides last week mark the third and fourth prison murders in less than 18 months at Bibb Correctional Facility. Bibb is Alabama's largest medium custody facility, housing more than 1800 men. Built in 1997, Bibb is also one of Alabama's newest facilities. Bibb has very little programming and employs hot bay management practices, which involves housing men with higher management needs together in a single open bay unit without ensuring the officer presence necessary to manage these units. Officers rarely enter these hot bay dorms, and no programming or management is provided, creating an extraordinarily dangerous environment for the men housed in these units.

EJI has conducted dozens of interviews with men incarcerated at Bibb and their families. Men incarcerated at Bibb consistently report that weapons and drugs are easily acquired and a large portion of the population is armed. Inadequate staffing results in virtually free-range movement between housing units and a striking lack of supervision for hours at a time within dorms. Further, many witnesses have reported that staff encourage inmates to keep weapons for their own protection, as staff are aware that they are not in control of the facility. Incarcerated people and their families also report that loved ones accumulate debts to other incarcerated people, who threaten to enforce collection through violence and sexual assault. EJI has investigated numerous debt-related sexual assaults at knife point at the facility.

The Alabama Department of Corrections also confirmed another prison suicide last week at Fountain Correctional Facility in Atmore. Twenty-four-year-old Rashaud Morrisette had been sentenced to three years for a third-degree burglary conviction in Mobile County.

The number of deaths in Alabama prisons greatly exceeds those in other states. Even compared to states like California and Louisiana, where a large proportion of the prison population is serving life sentences, Alabama has experienced the largest and fastest rise in prison mortality in the past 10 years. Since 2008, Alabama's rate of prison mortality has more than doubled, from 297 to 651 deaths per 100,000 incarcerated people. This increase is nearly 2000 percent greater than the most recently reported national average, which showed prison mortality rising only 6 percent from 2008 to 2014.

This skyrocketing mortality rate is fueled by deaths from homicide, suicide, and drug overdoses, many of which are not publicly reported and are classified as deaths due to natural causes in ADOC statistical reports. EJI has investigated deaths due to serious assaults that were reported in ADOC statistical reports as deaths due to natural causes. EJI has also investigated fatal and near-fatal overdoses from fentanyl at several Alabama correctional facilities, including Bibb. EJI has called on the ADOC commissioner and on Alabama's governor to declare that emergency action is needed.

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