

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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06.12.14

EJI is calling for a new warden and change in leadership at St. Clair Correctional Facility in Springville, Alabama, in response to several recent murders of incarcerated people. On Monday, following the tragic murder of yet another prisoner at St. Clair prison last week, EJI renewed a formal request to Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Kim Thomas to remove Carter Davenport as warden and appoint correctional staff who can immediately begin to address the dramatic increase in serious violence at St. Clair Correctional.

Last week, Jodey Waldrop became the third inmate to be murdered at St. Clair Correctional in the last ten months. It was the fifth murder in the last thirty months. There have been dozens of nearly fatal stabbing incidents or assaults in recent months and there is a great deal of tension and frustration at the facility. We do not think that the Department of Corrections can meaningfully accomplish reform and improve security and management of prisons unless wardens and correctional staff are held accountable when there is serious misconduct or tragic violence, said EJI Director Bryan Stevenson.

Davenport was promoted to warden despite a history of discipline for unprofessional conduct. He instituted numerous changes upon his arrival at St. Clair in 2011 that have resulted in a sharp rise in the level of violence at the maximum security prison. EJI investigators have documented widespread corruption at the prison, where correctional staff smuggle in drugs and contraband which often leads to conflict and violence among prisoners. EJI has also confirmed that prison cells are not secure and cell locks do not operate properly, which has been directly tied to several of the violent incidents in which prisoners have been killed or seriously injured. There is also evidence that staff ignore requests for assistance from prisoners when they have been threatened and face imminent attack.

Family members of the murder and assault victims at St. Clair who contacted Warden Davenport have filed several complaints with EJI and Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) officials about rude and unprofessional treatment by the warden and correctional staff, making a tragic situation worse.

ADOC officials are not accurately reporting the high level of violence within facilities. Although there were at least two homicides in ADOC facilities in May 2013, a third in August 2013, and a fourth in October 2013, ADOC reported only one homicide in its year-end total when it filed its public report in December 2013.

ADOC officials have done very little to hold institutional wardens and leaders accountable for problems within prisons. Tutwiler Warden Frank Albright remained in office despite constant reports of rape, sexual abuse, and assault of incarcerated women by correctional staff that have been confirmed by investigations conducted by [EJI](#), the [National Institute of Corrections](#), and most recently, the [U.S. Department of Justice](#). Incarcerated women at Tutwiler have consistently reported that the single most significant improvement at the facility has been the recent departure of Warden Albright.

There has to be greater accountability for serious increases in violence within state prisons, said Stevenson. Unless something is done to change the priorities of institutional leaders, the culture of violence and dysfunction at St. Clair and other facilities with excessive levels of violence, abuse, and misconduct will continue to cost lives and threaten public safety.

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