

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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09.23.14

Florida Department of Corrections Secretary Michael Crews on Friday fired thirty-two prison guards who were accused of criminal wrongdoing or misconduct in connection with the deaths of inmates at four Florida prisons.

Eighteen guards were fired for inappropriate use of force that resulted in the death of Matthew Walker at Charlotte Correctional Institution on April 11. Five others had been accused of using excessive force in the death of Rudolf Rowe on August 16, 2012, at Union Correctional Facility.

Also fired was Rollin Suttle Austin, a guard who ordered the gassing of Randall Jordan-Aparo, a 27-year-old sentenced for check forging, as he begged to be taken to the hospital for a blood disorder. The young man died that night. Mr. Austin kept his job for three years, until prison inspectors discovered the case of what they called sadistic, retaliatory behavior by guards. The United States Department of Justice is now investigating Mr. Jordan-Aparos death.

Floridas corrections department has been under scrutiny since the Miami Herald reported in May about the 2012 death of Darren Rainey, a mentally ill inmate who collapsed and died after guards locked him in a shower running unbearably hot water for nearly two hours. When he was found, chunks of skin were slipping off his body. No one was held accountable, but after the initial reports were published, police began to interview witnesses, and the prisons warden and top deputy were fired.

In stark contrast with corrections officials failure to meaningfully respond to [inmate killings and abuse in Alabama prisons](#), Secretary Crews has acknowledged his department failed to take action against officers who abused inmates. He has ordered a review of all cases in which officers were placed on paid leave following possible criminal wrongdoing. We continue to root out any and all bad actors who do not live up to our expectations, he said in a statement on Friday.

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