

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/tutwiler-prison-for-women-alabama-ranked-one-of-worst-in-nation/>

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05.14.13

Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, Alabama, has been ranked as one of the ten worst prisons in the country.

Mother Jones magazine compiled a list of Americas ten worst prisons based on three years of research, correspondence with prisoners, and interviews with criminal-justice reform advocates. Tutwiler ranked seventh on the list, which includes the federal maximum penitentiary in Florence, Colorado; the Allan B. Polunsky Unit in Livingston, Texas; Tent City Jail in Phoenix, Arizona; the Orleans Parish Prison in New Orleans, Louisiana; and the Los Angeles County Jail at Pelican Bay in Crescent City, California.

Last year, [EJI filed a complaint with the Justice Department](#) calling for a swift and thorough federal investigation into rampant abuse at Tutwiler, where in interviews with more than 50 incarcerated women, EJI had uncovered evidence of frequent and severe officer-on-inmate sexual violence.

In January, the [National Institute of Corrections reported](#) that Tutwiler is a repressive and intimidating environment. Inmates reported being in fear of retaliation from staff if they reject staffs sexual advances. Additionally, they report that they feel that they cannot bring their complaints to the administration, as they will be locked down if they annoy or anger some administrators and staff.

In April, the [United States Department of Justice launched a formal investigation](#) into conditions at Tutwiler.

In response to evidence of abuse by guards at Tutwiler, the Alabama Department of Corrections plans to install security cameras in the prison. The Alabama Legislature passed a new budget last week that increases the corrections budget from \$372.8 million this year to \$389.5 million next year, an increase of \$16.7 million.

The increase is about \$3.7 million less than prison commissioner Kim Thomas requested. It will allow him to hire about 100 more officers to lower the number of inmates each guard has to supervise, but Thomas told reporters that he will have to delay plans to remodel an old state Department of Mental Health facility in Wetumpka into a womens facility that would reduce crowding at Tutwiler.

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Mother Jones

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122 Commerce Street Montgomery, AL 36104 [\(334\) 269-1803](tel:(334)269-1803) [\[emailprotected\]](#)

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