

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/highest-ever-homicide-rate-alabama-prisons/>

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01.04.16

Last year was the most lethal year in the history of Alabamas correctional system. Seven men were killed in 2015 while incarcerated in Alabama prisons. Four of the homicides occurred in medium custody facilities and several of the victims were serving sentences for non-violent offenses when they were killed, including the most recent on November 28, 2015.

With its prison system at over 190 percent of capacity, Alabama has the highest rate of prison overcrowding in the country. This overcrowding has led to horrific violence within state prisons and the highest homicide rates in the country. Tragically, people punished for non-violent drug and property crimes fall victim to this preventable violence and suffer serious stabbings, assaults, and robberies as a direct result of their incarceration in Alabama.

In a recent news interview, Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Jefferson Dunn acknowledged that years of severe overcrowding, combined with unprecedented staff shortages, have created a system-wide crisis in Alabamas prisons: And I cant pinpoint it on a map or on a calendar, but at some point in the future, I believe something significant will happen and it will be because we havent made the investment that we need to make now to prevent something like that from happening in the future.

Mr. Dunn replaced former commissioner [Kim Thomas who resigned](#) in April after EJI called for new leadership and [issued numerous reports](#) documenting the Departments inaction in the face of serious sexual and physical abuse by correctional staff and dangerous conditions that have led to extraordinarily high rates of violence in Alabamas prisons.

The most recent homicide victim was thirty-five year old Marreo Mitchell, who was incarcerated on a drug charge at Donaldson Correctional Facility in Bessemer, Alabama, when he was stabbed to death on November 28, 2015. Mr. Mitchell was the seventh person to be killed since February 2015.

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