

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/two-men-murdered-in-alabama-prisons-in-past-week/>

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10.12.21

Two men incarcerated in Alabama were murdered last week as the mortality rate in the states prisons skyrockets.

Travis Hutchins, a 34-year-old Black man from Jefferson County, was stabbed to death by another incarcerated man in a housing dormitory at Bibb Correctional Facility on October 7.

Kenneth Gilchrist, a 31-year-old Black man from Mobile, was stabbed to death at Donaldson Correctional Facility on October 11.

The murders are the ninth and tenth homicides in Alabama prisons this year.

They are also the 33rd and 34th homicides since the U.S. Justice Department released its [findings](#) in April 2019 that Alabama routinely violates the constitutional rights of prisoners by failing to protect them from rampant violence and sexual abuse. The Justice Department found a high level of violence that is too common, cruel, of an unusual nature, and pervasive.

Over the past decade, Alabamas prison system has seen one of the largest and fastest increases in prison mortality in the country. Alabamas prison mortality rate increased from 296 deaths per 100,000 incarcerated people in 2008 to 588 in 2018. That 99% jump is more than three times the increase seen in other state prisons across the country.

Since 2018, Alabamas prison mortality rate has continued to rise, reaching 1,087 deaths per 100,000 in 2020.

Alabamas skyrocketing prison mortality rate is fueled by deaths from homicide, suicide, and drug overdoses, many of which are not publicly reported and are misclassified as deaths due to natural causes in statistical reports produced by the Alabama Department of Corrections.

The Justice Department found that ADOCs reporting obscures the level of harm from violence in Alabamas prisons for men by classifying prisoners deaths as occurring by natural causes when the death is caused by prisoner-on-prisoner violence.

Travis Hutchins (left) and Kenneth Gilchrist

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