

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/ohio-officials-must-conduct-full-investigation-suicide-ariel-castro>**

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CLEVELAND The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio issued the following statement in response to the suicide of Ariel Castro while incarcerated in an Ohio prison.

"The death of any individual while in state custody must be taken very seriously and fully investigated. As horrifying as Mr. Castro's crimes may be, the state has a responsibility to ensure his safety from himself and others," said ACLU of Ohio Executive Director Christine Link. "Questions remain whether Mr. Castro was properly screened for suicide risk and mental illness. Prisons officials must address these issues, not only to fully account for how Mr. Castro was able to commit suicide, but also to prevent this from occurring again."

Ariel Castro was found hanged at 9:20 p.m. on Tuesday evening in his cell at the Corrections Reception Center in Orient, Ohio. According to statements from the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, Mr. Castro was placed in protective custody in a single cell and was monitored every half hour. However, Mr. Castro was not placed on suicide watch, which would have entailed round the clock monitoring by corrections officers.

Mr. Castro's suicide marks the seventh in Ohio prisons this year. Less than a month ago, death row inmate Billy Slagle was found hanged in his cell days before his scheduled execution.

"Unfortunately, mental illness is all too common in our prisons, as our justice system increasingly is used to criminalize those with mental illness rather than provide them with treatment. Those who do not enter prison with severe mental illness are likely to develop issues given the severe prison atmosphere," said Link. "With a prison system that is expanding, rather than contracting, mental health services are strained more than ever. Prisons must be safe in order for them to run effectively. While it is important to investigate Mr. Castro's death and the events surrounding his suicide, prison officials must also take this opportunity to assess the entire system to ensure those most in need are provided treatment."

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