



Justice Champ Lyons

Senator Clyde Chambliss

Senator Cam Ward

Senator Bobby Singleton

Representative Chris England

Representative Jim Hill

Representative Connie Rowe

Director Kelly Butler

Commissioner Jeff Dunn

Attorney General Steve Marshall

To the Members of the Governor's Criminal Justice Study Group:

The carnage in our prisons has continued unabated.

On December 4, Alabamians for Fair Justice [held a press conference](#) in which coalition members invoked the names of twenty-one people who have died by homicide, suicide, or overdose in Alabama prisons this year. Sandy Ray, whose son Steven Davis was [beaten to death](#) by correctional officers in October, urged Alabama Department of Corrections Commissioner Jefferson Dunn to act. She told the crowd that some of the officers involved in her son's killing are still employed by ADOC. But rather than meaningful action, we have seen more death – within days of Ray's remarks, at least five more men died in Alabama prisons.

Since the press conference, ADOC has [confirmed](#) the [deaths](#) of Michael Smith, Willie Leon Scott, Cornelius Jackson, Byron Tubbs, and Brandon Ladd. Like Davis, Smith was beaten to death by correctional officers. Several more violent deaths have been reported to Alabamians for Fair Justice in the days since the press conference but remained unconfirmed by ADOC. Commissioner Dunn's answer to this escalating crisis is to form an "internal task force." According to ADOC officials, concerns about deadly use of force will be addressed through a "refreshment course" for correctional officers.

We demand more.

If ADOC wants to invite real oversight of its violent prisons, it must include independent, external observers in its new task force. The people of Alabama do not trust prison officials to provide

meaningful oversight of the violence in their prisons and amidst their correctional officers' ranks. They have had that option for the last several years and they have failed. In September, Deputy Commissioner Charles Daniels presented ADOC's plan to address violence to the Governor's Study Group on criminal justice. Two months and [several deaths](#) later, Commissioner Daniels [left](#) ADOC. The violence remained.

In the past year alone, ADOC has been put on notice by the [US Department of Justice](#), by the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), by [Alabamians for Fair Justice](#), and by the [press](#) that their prisons are the deadliest in the country. Time and time again ADOC has committed to new forms of internal oversight, and new strategic plans. It has been in the midst of this heightened scrutiny that these latest deaths have occurred.

To signal its commitment to accountability and transparency, Alabamians for Fair Justice calls upon Commissioner Dunn and Governor Ivey to include independent, external observers on any new task force on prison violence. At the least, these observers should include:

- Legislators with experience on the prison oversight committee
- Advocates who have served time in ADOC prisons
- Lawyers who represent people in prison
- Family members of people who have been victims of violence in ADOC prisons
- Currently incarcerated advocates

We welcome ADOC to discuss the composition of its new task force with Alabamians for Fair Justice. In the meantime, we demand that ADOC release information about the investigations into the murders of Steven Davis, Michael Smith, and any other people killed by correctional officers. We demand to know whether ADOC still employs officers involved in their deaths, and if so, why. We demand more.

Signed,

Alabamians for Fair Justice