



February 25, 2022

**Via Email**

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Kristen Clark, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division  
Kristen.Clarke@usdoj.gov

Myesha Braden, Associate Deputy Attorney General, Civil Rights Division  
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Michael Horowitz, Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General  
Michael.E.Horowitz@usdoj.gov

Sarah E. Lake, Assistant Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General  
Sarah.Lake@usdoj.gov

U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Ms. Gupta, Ms. Clark, Ms. Braden, Mr. Horowitz, and Ms. Lake,

We write as over one hundred organizations throughout California and the United States to express our deep concern over repeated sexual abuse of incarcerated people by staff at the Federal Correctional Institute in Dublin, California (FCI Dublin). **The Department of Justice (DOJ) must take swift, sweeping action to address the institutional culture that allowed staff to perpetrate this abuse, and to prevent further harm to incarcerated people.**

As you are aware, over the course of the past five months, **federal prosecutors have charged four FCI Dublin officials with sexually abusing people in their custody.** These officials—including former Warden Ray Garcia, Chaplain James Highhouse, Officer John Bellhouse, and Technician Ross Clinger—are accused of engaging in abhorrent conduct, ranging from forcing incarcerated women to strip naked and taking photographs (which were then stored on the Warden’s BOP-issued cell phone), to acts of rape and other forced sexual contact.

Staff abuse at FCI Dublin unfolded over the course of several years, and has only now come to light thanks to the bravery and tenacity of incarcerated survivors, as well as the brazen conduct of their abusers. **This abuse cannot be seen as bad acts by a few bad actors; this conduct required the participation and complicity of staff across the facility, and was the product of a deep-seated culture of impunity and retaliation at FCI Dublin.** Indeed, a recent Associated Press investigation uncovered a “permissive and toxic culture” of abuse at the facility.

We are aware that survivors who previously attempted to report abuse at FCI Dublin in recent years were discouraged, or outright prevented, from seeking redress by facility staff. For example, it has been widely reported that former Warden Garcia (who was responsible for training FCI Dublin personnel in sexual abuse prevention and compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act), told one of the women he abused that he was “close friends” with the individual responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct, and warned her that he “could not” be fired. We have heard from other survivors who reported or attempted to report staff abuse and were then subjected to retaliation, including harassment by prison staff and loss of access to vital programming and facility jobs. We have also heard from survivors who have suffered staff abuse but are afraid to report their experiences out of fear of such retaliation.

Unfortunately, as organizations that support people in carceral institutions across the state and country, **we know that staff misconduct, impunity for abusers, and retaliation towards survivors who attempt to seek justice are all too common behind bars.** Study after study have shown that the vast majority of people incarcerated in women’s prisons are subjected to sexual harassment and abuse. Indeed, we are aware that the recent string of federal charges represent *the third time in three decades* that FCI Dublin staff have been publicly accused of sexually abusing people in their custody. And the Associated Press has reported that, in the past two years, over 100 BOP employees have been arrested, convicted, or sentenced for crimes, as the agency continued to ignore rampant staff misconduct, and in 2020, there were 422 complaints of staff sexual abuse in BOP facilities.

While we are glad to see the federal government acknowledge these specific instances of abuse at FCI Dublin and attempt to hold the perpetrators to account, we know that **the arrest, conviction, or incarceration of a handful of bad actors will not bring justice for survivors of staff abuse at FCI Dublin. Instead, we repeat that the DOJ must take swift, sweeping action to address the institutional culture that allowed staff to perpetrate this abuse, and to prevent further harm to incarcerated people.**

After consulting with our clients and other individuals incarcerated at FCI Dublin, we ask that your offices *immediately and at a minimum:*

- Conduct a **thorough, independent investigation** into staff abuse and complicity in abuse (including retaliation against survivors and their supporters) at FCI Dublin;
- Establish **unmonitored lines of communication** for incarcerated individuals to report staff misconduct to an external, independent body;
- Ensure that personnel accused of abuse cannot have any direct contact with incarcerated individuals, and staff that are found to have abused incarcerated individuals (or facilitated such abuse) are dismissed from their positions entirely;
- Exercise your authority to **release individuals who have survived staff abuse** to their families and communities, in order to prevent further re-traumatization;

- Provide **accessible, comprehensive medical care**, including mental health care, to incarcerated survivors of staff abuse.

We request a response to this letter by March 11, 2022, to Susan Beaty at Centro Legal de la Raza ([sbeaty@centrolegal.org](mailto:sbeaty@centrolegal.org) or 510.679.3674). We also request a meeting with representatives from the Department of Justice in the coming weeks. Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Northern California  
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus  
 California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice  
 California Coalition for Women Prisoners  
 Centro Legal de la Raza  
 Color of Change  
 Critical Resistance  
 Ella Baker Center for Human Rights  
 Legal Services for Prisoners with Children  
 Survived and Punished  
 The Sentencing Project  
 Project South

San Francisco, CA  
 San Francisco, CA  
 San Francisco, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 National  
 Washington, D.C.  
 Atlanta, GA

A Little Piece of Light  
 A New PATH / Moms United to End the War on Drugs  
 Acting OutSide Performance Art Crew  
 African Advocacy Network  
 Al Otro Lado  
 Alianza Sacramento  
 Anti Police-Terror Project  
 Asian Prisoner Support Committee  
 Be Frank 4 Justice  
 Beauty After the Bars  
 BRAIV (Berkeley Resistance Against Interpersonal Violence)  
 Buen Vecino  
 California NOW  
 Campaign to End Life Without Parole (CELWOP)  
 Campaign to Free Maddesyn George  
 CAN-DO Foundation  
 Catalyst Project  
 Causa Justa :: Just Cause  
 Coalition for Effective Public Safety  
 College and Community Fellowship  
 Colorado-CURE, Inc.  
 Community Healers

New York and Los Angeles  
 San Diego, CA  
 Illinois  
 San Francisco, CA  
 Los Angeles, CA  
 Sacramento CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Texas  
 Charlotte, NC  
 Berkeley, CA  
 Ventura County, CA  
 Pasadena, CA  
 Massachusetts  
 Washington  
 Malibu, CA  
 San Francisco, CA  
 Oakland, CA  
 Boston, MA  
 New York, NY  
 Colorado  
 Sacramento CA

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto	East Palo Alto, CA
Community Works	San Francisco Bay Area, CA
COYOTE RI	Rhode Island
Criminal Justice Clinic, UC Irvine School of Law	Irvine, CA
CSOR	Denver, CO
CURE California	California
Decarcerate Sacramento	Sacramento, CA
Dignity and Power Now	Los Angeles
Disability Justice League	San Francisco Bay Area, CA
Dolores Street Community Services	San Francisco, CA
Education and Leadership Foundation	Fresno, CA
El/La Para TransLatinas	San Francisco, CA
End Solitary Santa Cruz County	Santa Cruz, CA
Fair Chance Project/ FUEL - Families United to End LWOP	Los Angeles, CA
Faithful Friends	Sacramento, CA
Food Empowerment Project	San José, CA
Freedom Archives	Berkeley, CA
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance	Washington, D.C.
Illinois Alliance for Reentry & Justice (ILARJ)	Illinois
Immigrant Legal Defense	Oakland, CA
Initiate Justice	Los Angeles, CA
Iowa Justice Action Network	Iowa
Kern County Participatory Defense	Kern County, CA
La Raza Community Resource Center	San Francisco, CA
Lakin & Wille LLP	Oakland, CA
Let's Get Free: The Women & Trans Prisoner Defense Committee	Pittsburgh, PA
Life Unbolted, Inc	Brooklyn, NY
Love & Protect	Chicago, IL
Maryland Justice Project	Maryland
Medina Orthwein LLP	Oakland, CA
Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration	Michigan
Mujeres Unidas y Activas	San Francisco Bay Area, CA
National Jericho Movement	Rochester, NY
National Lawyers Guild - SF Bay Area Chapter	San Francisco Bay Area, CA
National Lawyers Guild - Massachusetts Chapter	Boston, MA
Nebraskans for Prison Reform	Nebraska
Nebraskans Unafraid	Omaha, NE
New Beginnings Reentry Services, Inc	Boston, MA
New Vision Organization, inc.	Massachusetts
Next Generation Justice	Burlington, VT
North Atlantic Books	Berkeley, CA
Operation Restoration	New Orleans, LA
Oregon CURE	Oregon
Out For Justice, Inc.	Baltimore, MD
Pacifica Social Justice	Pacifica CA
Parole Illinois	Illinois
Project Rebound - Cal Poly Humboldt	Arcata, CA
Rainbow Beginnings	San Francisco, CA

Real Cost of Prisons Project	Northampton, MA
Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP)	New York
Reproductive Justice Inside	Maryland
Riverside All of Us or None	Riverside, CA
Robert Allen Hood, former warden, Bureau of Prisons	
Root & Rebound	Oakland, CA
San Francisco Immigrant Legal & Education Network (SFILEN)	San Francisco, CA
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)	California
Start Over Inc.	Corona, CA
SURJ - San Francisco	San Francisco, CA
SURJ - Sacramento	Sacramento, CA
Survived & Punished - California	California
The Collective Healing And Transformation Project (CHAT)	Richmond, CA
The F8 Foundation	Massachusetts
The Transformative In-Prison Workgroup	California
TILIFI	Little Rock, AR
Time for Change Foundation	San Bernardino, CA
Transitions Clinic Network	San Francisco, CA
UCLA Center for the Study of Women	Los Angeles, CA
Unapologetically HERS	San Francisco Bay Area, CA
USF Immigration & Deportation Defense Clinic	San Francisco, CA
West End P.O.W.E.R.	Pittsburgh PA
What's Next Washington	Seattle, WA
Witness to Mass Incarceration	New York
Women & Justice Issues	Oakland, CA
Women's Prison Book Project	Minneapolis, MN

cc:

Director Michael Carvajal, Federal Bureau of Prisons

Warden Thahesha Jusino, FCI Dublin

Senator Alex Padilla, United States Senate

Senator Diane Feinstein, United States Senate

Senator Dick Durban, United States Senate

Congressman Eric Swalwell, United States House of Representatives