

## Christian Ministry Chides Justice Department for Inadequate Prison Rape Policy

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The Prison Fellowship, a Christian ministry that works with incarcerated individuals to transform and heal lives affected by crime, has argued that new standards adopted by the government to combat prison rape fails to protect those awaiting deportation and undocumented children.

On Thursday, the Obama Administration ordered federal, state, and local officials to adopt a zero tolerance policy for prison rape issuing new standards to help prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse across the country's incarceration facilities. However, the act was not extended to the Department of Homeland Security Health and Human Services, which houses immigrants slated for deportation and undocumented children.

Now activists such as Pat Nolan, president of the prison ministry's Justice Fellowship and former member of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission, are arguing that the standards are not sufficient as they do not extend standardized government-wide protection to all incarcerated individuals – regardless of citizenship.

"It was clearly the intent of Congress that every person in confinement in the U.S. would be protected from being raped. (Attorney General) Holder's decision leaves those in Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities, many of whom are not accused of a crime, at the mercy of sexual predators," said Nolan to The Associated Press.

However, the act will implement much-needed measures including requiring detention facilities to preform background checks on prospective employees and avoid hiring convicted abusers, preventing juveniles from living with adult inmates, and incorporating the "unique vulnerabilities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and gender nonconforming inmates into training and screening protocols." The new standards would additionally require that facilities be audited every three years to ensure compliance.

"The standards we establish today reflect the fact that sexual assault crimes committed within our correctional facilities can have devastating consequences – for individual victims and for communities far beyond our jails and prisons," Attorney General Eric Holder said in a statement regarding the zero tolerance policy on the Department of Justice website.

"These standards are the result of a thoughtful and deliberative process – and represent a critical step forward in protecting the rights and safety of all Americans," he added.

The announcement for a zero tolerance policy on prison rape came as the Justice Department released its first-ever [National Former Prisoner Survey](#) indicating that one in 10 former prisoners faced sexual victimization at the hands of inmates or other prison staff.

The survey was conducted between January and October of 2008 and highlighted the prevalence of sexual victimization, individual risk factors, coercion and physical injury, facility characteristics, and consequences of sexual victimization.

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