

# Prisoner Testimony

## Public Hearing on Prison Privatization 2010

The American Friends Service Committee sent eleven questionnaires to prisoners in private facilities. The prisoners who received the questionnaire had been in correspondence with AFSC previously. Nine completed surveys were returned and they offered an assortment of perspectives from their stays in GEO Groups Florence and Phoenix West, Management and Training Corporation's Kingman Facility, and Corrections Corporation of America's Red Rock Correctional Facility which houses prisoners from out of state. Names have been omitted.

### Conditions of the Facility

"The facility itself is maintained fairly well, but it is extremely overcrowded here. In a pod that holds 62 people there is only 5 sinks, 3 toilets, 2 urinals and we have to shower in direct view of staff including female staff members." –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

"The facility at A.S.P.C. Phoenix West seemed very overcrowded for the size of the facility. There were almost 500 inmates at that facility and the recreation yard is very small. I believe it is a bad location for so many men and a prison. The rec. yard equipment is not maintained properly for safe use. Example: exercise bars are often not taped and can cause serious injury due to slipping. The facility at Florence West seems to be a better size but the conditions as far as cooling and ventilation don't seem to be maintained or are just in need of replacing coolers and vents." –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

"We have swamp coolers only and in the summer it is so hot we have to sleep in boxers and we still sweat like crazy. It gets very hard to sleep. We are packed in her pretty well. We have very small living spaces, not even the size of a cell because we're in a dorm setting. Also the winter gets very cold and I have to wear half my clothes just to fall asleep." –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

"I was here for the entire summer. It was so stuffy and hot it was difficult to breathe." –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

"I am housed in an air-conditioning facility. Sometimes the heating and cooling is adequate, and sometimes it's not. The air-conditioning filters are not changed regularly as it sucks in dust and even insects into our cell. The prison is poorly maintained." –Hawaiian Prisoner at Red Rock Correctional Facility (Operated by CCA)

"The food here has been severely substandard. Sometimes the meat is so foul smelling and tasting you simply can't eat it. People have found glass, roaches, and grasshoppers in their food. Quite frequently food that should be hot is cold and vice versa. The kitchen staff often doesn't prepare enough food so portions aren't adequate and we wait for extended periods of time to eat while more is prepared"—Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

### Safety

"Highly unsafe. There is nothing the staff is capable of controlling. The staff are unprepared to stop physical altercations. They have no means to stop us." –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

"Completely unsafe. If something were to happen the staff is neither qualified or able to contain any serious situations. The staff, I believe would rush out and assure own safety. Complete lack of fire safety, regarding welfare of the inmates." –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“Honestly I don’t feel very safe at all. Not long ago there was an issue with the food. They serve us chicken salad with warm mayo and almost the entire unit got sick. Also earlier this year there have been two inmates; [names omitted], who died because they were not given the proper medical treatment. [Name omitted] had been seeking treatment and medical staff told he him was overreacting. He died a week later. [Name omitted] was playing basketball when he collapsed and stopped breathing. The nurse showed up and asked the inmates if we knew CPR. [Name omitted] died because no one preformed CPR.” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“No inmate feels safe especially when some staff are abusive toward inmates. Some staff do not have common sense when it comes to the safety of inmates. Doors accidentally opening exposing certain class of inmates to their enemies. There were several incidents at FCC and RRC where the inmates got seriously assaulted or stabbed.” –Hawaiian Prisoner at Red Rock Correctional Facility (Operated by CCA)

### **Staffing**

“Since I’ve been in the mainland I have suffered racism, retaliation for expressing my rights (filing informal resolution, etc), I’ve been sexually harassed, threatened, verbally abused, false disciplinary reports filed against me, poor medical treatment and follow up care. There were several medical staff who claim to be a doctor when they were not.” –Hawaiian Prisoner at Red Rock Correctional Facility (Operated by CCA)

“Recently the Chief of Unit Management and two deputy wardens were replaced. And many corrections officers and other staff quit or are terminated” –Hawaiian Prisoner at Red Rock Correctional (Operated by CCA)

“The CPO’s regularly lose inmates release paperwork and inmates don’t go home on time. It is just a very poorly run facility” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“One of the guards was arrested in the parking lot after his evening shift” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“There is a very high turnover rate at A.S.P.C. Phoenix West and I believe that is what leads to the uneducated training of the staff and because of [the warden]’s attitude on how to operate the facility” –Former Phoenix West Prisoner (Operated by GEO Group)

“Yes [there is a high turnover of staff], probably due to low pay” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“The majority of the staff appear unkempt, out of shape and lazy. With my own eyes I’ve seen them enforce rules on one person and let the next slide. They talk in an abusive manner towards inmates quite frequently cussing or trying to make us look stupid in front of each other. I believe they get most of their training on the job from other guards who don’t do their job in a professional manner.” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“They’re highly unprofessional. They have to be placed on opposite shifts because some of them have children with one another and currently not getting along because of other current relationships” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“They are very preoccupied and overworked” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“Since I’ve been here we have had 2 inmates die at this facility. One put in sick-call slip after sick-call slip only to be turned away without proper medical help only to die a week or two later. The other put in sick-calls too and was not properly handled and ended up dying a short time later. Inmates watched in horror as undertrained nurses

did nothing to try to revive the 30 year old inmate in question. Stating and I quote: ‘I don’t know how to do CPR.’” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“I would much rather be on a normal DOC state run facility because it seems that officers are trained better and respect us men when respect is given.” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

### **Programs and Time**

“I have entirely too much idle time. I have a C clearance, but I can’t even utilize it on this yard. They don’t have jobs off the yard in comparison to other minimum yards. I’ve been trying to work in the kitchen and they won’t even allow me to do that. I’ve been trying for over 3 months.” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“I could be using this time more positively and I try to. But there needs to be more emphasis on programs and possibly trade education so people actually leave here better persons knowing a trade or having an education so they can be productive members of society” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“Yes I do participate [in programs] trying to suck up as much help and knowledge I can get. But a lot of the material is quite old and the people running these programs are just going through the motions not really interested in helping and often look down on us like we are lesser” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“I do have a lot of idle time because I completed all of my programming before I got to this yard”—Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“If us inmates walk out of the gates the same as we walked in them then we’ll be back in the same situation. We made mistakes but we still deserve to be able to work hard, take a trade, program more, and just accomplish something with our time here.” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“And I also believe that’s why there’s such a lack of rehabilitation and job trade education, because they don’t want to help us become better individuals. They want us to come back so they can make more money. Cause let’s face it if we leave and not come back they’re out of business” –Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

### **Family**

“Upon leaving Hawaii and upon arriving on the mainland I felt lonely and lost. Family is the number one source of rehabilitation.” –Hawaiian Prisoner at Red Rock Correctional Facility (Operated by CCA)

“I think it would be horrible [to be transferred out of state]. Family support is extremely important for me. My family keeps me going and helps me try to maintain a positive attitude.”—Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“My visits went through but my family is too far away to come visit me. I only put them on my visit list because it is mandatory in order for me to call them, but my phone calls aren’t on yet.”—Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)

“Another major issue is the phone system here. It is contracted to a company called CBS. It takes a long time to get our phones activated. The company wants at \$50 deposit even when the party you are calling has a land line. After submitting numerous telephone trouble-shoot forms, I am still unable to call.”—Prisoner at Florence West (Operated by GEO Group)