



# INMATES AT CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S PRISON SUE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER SEXUAL ABUSE - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Eight inmates at a San Francisco Bay Area lockup — dubbed the “rape club” by prisoners and workers alike — filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the federal Bureau of Prisons, saying sexual abuse and exploitation has not stopped despite the prosecution of the former warden and several former officers.

The lawsuit filed in Oakland by attorneys representing the inmates and the advocacy group California Coalition for Women Prisoners also names the current warden and 12 former and current guards. It alleges the Bureau of Prisons and staff at the Dublin facility didn’t do enough to prevent sexual abuse going back to the 1990s.

[An Associated Press investigation last year](#) found a culture of abuse and cover-ups that had persisted for years at the prison, about 21 miles (34 kilometers) east of Oakland. That reporting led to increased scrutiny from Congress and pledges from the federal Bureau of Prisons that it would fix problems and change the culture at the prison.

The Bureau of Prisons has failed to address rampant misconduct in its ranks and protect the safety of those in its care, said Amaris Montes, an attorney at Rights Behind Bars representing the plaintiffs.

“Individual prisoners have had to endure rape, groping, voyeurism, forced stripping, sexually explicit comments on an everyday basis and so much more,” she said.

The lawsuit seeks a third party to oversee the prison to ensure inmates have access to a confidential place to report abuse. It also asks that all victims be given access to medical and mental health care and legal counsel.

The plaintiffs, which are asking the court to certify the case as a class action, also want compassionate release for victims and for those who are living in the country illegally to be issued a “U visa,” a special visa program for victims of crime.

Bureau of Prisons spokesperson Donald Murphy said that the bureau does not comment on pending litigation or ongoing investigations.

In March, [a judge sentenced former warden Ray J. Garcia to 70 months in prison](#) for sexually abusing three female inmates and forcing them to pose naked for photos in their cells. Garcia was among eight prison workers, including a chaplain, charged with abusing inmates

and the first to go to trial.

Montes said a sexual abuse culture persists at the low-security facility and inmates who report violations continue to face retaliation, including being put in solitary confinement and having all their belongings confiscated.



“We went to visit the prison yesterday and we heard additional stories of recent sexual abuse within this last week,” Montes said. “The BOP has tried to address individual officers and is trying to make it seem like it’s an issue of bad actors or bad apples, but it’s really a systemic issue.”

A former inmate at the federal facility said she was sexually abused by an officer who manipulated her with promises that he could get her compassionate release. The Associated Press does not identify people who say they have been sexually abused unless they agree to be named.

She said she also witnessed the sexual abuse of fellow inmates and the retaliation against those who reported the officers’ misconduct.

She said she was incarcerated at the prison from 2019-2022 on a drug trafficking conviction. She said she was put in solitary confinement and lost all her belongings after her cellmate reported being abused.

“They were supposed to protect us because we were in their custody, but personally, I was abused and I saw officers abuse women, especially those who had been there longer. I saw them harassing them, grabbing, groping them,” she said in Spanish, her voice breaking.