

Abuse behind bars US prisons**🕒 This article is more than 1 year old**

US federal women's prison plagued by rampant staff sexual abuse to close

Since 2021, eight employees of Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, charged with assaulting female prisoners



📷 The Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, in 2006. Photograph: Ben Margot/AP

Sam Levin and agencies

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The US Bureau of Prisons (BoP) is closing a federal women's prison in [California](#) that has been plagued by rampant staff sexual abuse of incarcerated residents.

Colette Peters, the BoP director, said in a statement to the Associated Press on Monday that Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Dublin was “not meeting expected standards and that the best course of action is to close the facility”.

The unusual closure announcement follows a series of criminal trials of former correctional officers found to have repeatedly sexually abused women in their custody at FCI Dublin, located 21 miles east of Oakland. A 2022 AP [investigation](#) also revealed that the facility was known among staff and residents as the “rape club” due to the widespread sexual violence by officers.

Peters said the BoP had “taken unprecedented steps and provided a tremendous amount of resources to address culture, recruitment and retention, aging infrastructure - and most critical - employee misconduct”. The decision to shutter the embattled prison, she said, was “made after ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of those unprecedented steps and additional resources”.

FCI Dublin is one of six women-only federal prisons in the US, and the only one in the west. It currently incarcerates 605 people who will be transferred to other facilities, Peters said. No employees will be losing their jobs. “The closure of the institution may be temporary but certainly will result in a mission change,” she added.

Eight FCI Dublin employees have been charged with sexually abusing incarcerated women since 2021, according to the AP. Five have pleaded guilty and two were convicted at trial, including Ray Garcia, the former warden who ran the facility. One case is still pending.

Advocates for the incarcerated residents have said the abuse documented in the criminal proceedings does not capture the full extent of the extensive misconduct, and eight FCI Dublin residents sued the BoP last year. Their complaint alleged that incarcerated residents continued to face severe retaliation for reporting sexual misconduct, including being placed in solitary confinement.

Last year, the Guardian [reported](#) on the case of a former FCI Dublin resident who reported being sexually abused by multiple guards, but after completing her sentence was transferred to US immigration custody threatened with deportation. Advocates said last year that several survivors of sexual abuse in the prison were deported and that dozens more were threatened with removal from the US.

Susan Beaty, senior attorney for the California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice, who has represented survivors of FCI abuse, said the closure was long overdue, but that the news had caused a lot of stress and confusion inside the facility. The residents have been given a single bag for their

belongings and were bracing for moves that could send them far away from their families, they said: “The BoP has already put the folks at Dublin through so much, and the scene unfolding right now in the prison is one of chaos and pandemonium.”

The news also comes after a US judge earlier this month **appointed** a special master to oversee FCI Dublin, the first time that has been done for the BoP. “[The] BoP was quite resistant to that and we’re concerned the closure is an attempt to evade that kind of accountability and oversight,” Beaty said. “The special master was on the ground last week and folks on the inside were encouraged and optimistic about the kinds of changes that might be coming.”

The judge on Monday ordered the BoP to halt any transfers until the bureau determined whether residents should be sent to another prison, released to home confinement or a halfway house or be granted compassionate release. The special master will review the transfer plans.

Beaty said they were further concerned that bureau would not be terminating any officers – “the same staff that have been running Dublin and participating in this really harmful culture”.

Peters said the BoP “for safety and security reasons” would not be sharing details about the timing of transfers, but that each woman’s “programming needs will be taken into account” and that the BoP would “endeavor to keep them as close to their release locations as possible and ensure that they have access to counsel at their receiving institution”.

One incarcerated Dublin resident, who requested anonymity for fear of retaliation, said on Monday that the uncertainty was causing significant anguish: “All of the sudden, they’re yelling at us to go to your cell, things are going to change, we’re going to take people out, pack up this one bag ... They’re not communicating with us, we’re just living in darkness.”

Another resident said she cried as she watched her best friend be driven away and that she feared people would be transferred to facilities with similar misconduct problems. She said: “[I wish] they would try to fix what’s going on here instead of not hearing us and taking us and putting us somewhere else ... I feel like that’s re-traumatizing all of us.”

FCI Dublin is one of many women’s prisons in the US to be plagued with major sexual abuse scandals. The two state women’s prisons in California have also faced repeated controversies surrounding **guards harassing and assaulting residents**, and retaliating against those who speak out. One

former state guard was charged last year with nearly 100 sexual abuse counts, accused of violating at least 22 women in custody.

In 2022, the US Senate reported that staff had sexually abused women in custody in at least two-thirds of BoP facilities, finding that some women were abused for months or years on end.

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