White Supremacist Prison Gangs in the United States

Read the full comprehensive report, *White Supremacist Prison Gangs in the United States: A Preliminary Inventory* *(PDF).*

Read the Anti-Defamation League's *letter to Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch* *(PDF).*

With rising numbers and an increasing geographical spread, white supremacist prison gangs have been the fastest-growing segment of the white supremacist movement in the United States in recent years, accompanied by a related rise in crime and violence.

White supremacist prison gangs are doubly dangerous in that they combine the criminal knowhow of organized crime with the bigotry of hate groups. Most of the violence and criminal activity stemming from white supremacist prison gangs takes the form of traditional crime--ranging from drugs to murder--but they also engage in hate crimes both behind bars and on the streets.

What is more, though they are called "prison" gangs, groups like the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Aryan Circle, European Kindred and others are just as active on the streets of America as they are behind bars, plaguing not only inmates but local communities across the whole country. For example, between 2000 and 2015, one white supremacist prison gang, the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, was by itself responsible for at least 33 murders in communities across Texas.

This report serves as a primer on white supremacist gangs in the United States and the problems they cause, but it is more than that. It also provides the first state-by-state inventory of such prison gangs, identifying nearly 100 different active white supremacist prison gangs. At least 35 states have at least one such gang and many states have to deal with multiple gangs. In some states, white supremacist prison gangs seem to be a particular problem, including Texas, California, Oklahoma, Indiana, Missouri, Oregon, and Tennessee.

Moreover, white supremacist prison gangs are not only numerous but large. While small gangs, especially in smaller states, may have no more than a few dozen members, larger white supremacist gangs can have over 500 members (the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas is reputed to have more than 2,000). Even these numbers often underestimate the true scope of such groups because, although most such gangs do not allow women as formal members, women actually still play a significant role in most of them.

The growth and spread of white supremacist prison gangs has become one of the United States' most serious--but least talked about--white supremacist problems.

Because of the seriousness of the white supremacist prison gang problem, ADL has written to Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch with suggestions for policy initiatives that could help the federal government and the various state governments better deal with the problems caused by prison gangs of all types.

These include:

1. The federal government should track violent prison gangs and publish a periodic report on the nature and magnitude of the dangers they pose--both inside correctional facilities and outside.

2. The Department of Justice and state corrections officials should collect statistics on the violent crimes committed by inmates associated with prison gangs--especially murders and bias-motivated crimes.

3. The Department of Justice and state corrections officials should publish periodic reports on bias-motivated criminal activity behind bars--and describe what authorities are doing to combat this activity.

4. The federal government and states should fund the creation of law enforcement task forces to address specific Bureau of Prisons and state and local prison gang problems--both problems behind bars and the impact of these criminal enterprises outside prison walls.

5. The federal government and state corrections officials should make increased funding available to create and promote "exit" programs to encourage prison gang members to leave their gangs.

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