



Prison closures leave crime survivors high and dry

GUEST COMMENTARY WRITTEN BY

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I know I shouldn't be surprised that Governor Gavin Newsom has proposed closing another prison in California. Or that he touts the benefits of rehabilitation and recovery, while completely overlooking victims, justice and accountability. Investing in rehabilitation has its benefits, but it should not come at the expense of victims or crime survivors and frankly, the general public. Closing another prison assumes that crime has decreased, the prison population has decreased and prisoners have served their time and/or have been rehabilitated. Those assumptions are false. Those assumptions are deadly. And it will become one more nail in the coffin for victims of crime.

Governor Newsom claims that a declining prison population warrants the closure of prisons. If prison populations are declining, it must be that crime is declining, right? WRONG. Governor Newsom, along with several legislators of the so-called public safety committee have upheld flawed legislation: Prop 47 downgraded several felony crimes to misdemeanors and Prop 57 gave early release to criminals with "credits" they earned. Last year alone, [more than 15,000 inmates were released early](#) because of Prop 57. Yes, the population declined, but artificially. What's worse, crime is on the rise. The [Public Policy Institute of California reported](#) that violent crimes increased in most counties.

I survived a violent crime, so this news strikes a chord for me. Because I didn't just survive attempted murder, I survived the lack of justice served when my assailant walked free with approx 120 days. I was drugged, punched, hit, kicked, suffocated and had my son's life threatened before I was able to escape and run to a neighbor for help. In the past 20+ years since that traumatic incident, I have dedicated my life to healing my physical, emotional and mental wounds by serving other crime survivors. We deserve better, and so do all Californians. The trend of decarceration is not the answer.

Take this year as an example. Together, we sadly kicked off 2023 with a funeral for [Riverside County Sheriff's Deputy murdered](#) by an inmate that had been released early. This was followed by a Selma Police Officer [killed by an inmate that had been released early](#). And, how about all the other offenders that never serve any time because their crimes are now considered misdemeanors? Where is the justice in that?

So let's close prisons. How does that make any sense? If there's really any hope of rehabilitating criminals, there needs to be a safe place to do that. It's not on the streets where people are terrorized. Keep them in the institutions that were built for that purpose. Keep the victims of crimes safe. Keep Californians safe.