

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **PUBLIC JUSTICE JOINS SUIT AGAINST GUARDS AT INFAMOUS PRISON** *'Egregious' Abuse Leaves Man Severely Injured; Represents Pattern of Abuse*

A Louisiana man bears the scars, pain and disabilities of a severe beating by guards at a notorious, now-defunct state prison and his injuries reflect a pattern of abuse at the facility, according to a federal lawsuit joined Thursday by **Public Justice, the Washington-based public interest law firm.**

The suit says **Keith Dillon**, 44, suffers hearing loss, back and knee pain, severe shooting pain in his shoulder and bicep, frequent headaches, blurred vision and broken teeth as the result of the beating by corrections officers at the **Jena Correctional Facility** about 250 miles north of New Orleans.

The U.S. Justice Department shut down the Jena prison in 2000 after uncovering chronic abuses there, but the facility was reopened to house inmates and detainees from New Orleans-area jails devastated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. At the time of his transfer, Dillon was being held in the Jefferson Parish Jail on a DUI charge.

**The lawsuit charges that Jena Warden T.W. Thompson, five Louisiana corrections officers and two New York prison guards** on loan to the facility “deliberately and maliciously assaulted and battered” Dillon, subjected him to deplorable conditions and failed to provide adequate medical care for his injuries.

The mistreatment began immediately, the suit says, noting that when Dillon was transferred from the Jefferson Parish Jail after days without food, water, electricity or functioning restrooms, he “was handcuffed with nylon cable tie cuffs so tight that his wrists bled.” Other transferees were frequently slapped, punched, beaten, stripped naked, hit with belts, and kicked by correctional officers at Jena, the suit says.

“What happened to Keith Dillon is a reprehensible act of violence and a constitutional violation that our country should not tolerate,” said **Soren Gisleson**, of the Herman, Herman, Katz & Cotlar law firm in New Orleans and lead counsel for Public Justice in the case.

**Public Justice attorney Michael Lucas** called Dillon’s treatment “unconscionable and inhumane,” adding that “There is no place for torture chambers in America. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and no one deserves what mr. Dillon suffered.” Lucas and **Public Justice attorney Adele Kimmel** are co-counsel in the lawsuit.

Jena was shut down again shortly after Katrina at the behest of human rights organizations and state legislators amid renewed allegations of widespread, gross abuse.

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The complaint filed by Public Justice is available at [http://www.tlpj.org/briefs/Dillon\\_brief\\_032907.pdf](http://www.tlpj.org/briefs/Dillon_brief_032907.pdf)

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