

Muslim gangs 'beat prisoners' who will not convert to Islam

From the [Daily Mail](#)

Extremist Muslim gangs in British prisons are forcing other inmates to convert to Islam or face violence, a Government report has warned. The gangs, often led by fanatics who are serving sentences for terrorism, are recruiting violent prisoners to be their 'foot soldiers', the report reveals. Inmates who refuse to convert to Islam and join their ranks are being ostracised or attacked.

The report, which examined three unnamed high security prisons in England, also describes how the gangs are instilling fear in staff. They are particularly keen to target offenders who are already in street gangs and therefore have a 'propensity for violence',

This latest report was undertaken by the Ministry of Justice with researchers at the University of Birmingham to better understand the nature of these gangs. Following interviews with 83 offenders and 73 staff members, it concluded that the gangs ruled by 'violence, bullying and intimidation.'

One prisoner told them: 'There is an underlying pressure for people to convert and join the gang. The tactic they use is to befriend someone when they come in. If they don't convert they will then start spreading rumours about them, that the person is a snitch, so that they will be ostracised. Then the beatings will follow.'

Gang members told researchers that their strength of numbers on the wings spread fear among other inmates. One Muslim prisoner said: "They know they're only going to three other jails and they know there will be brothers waiting there to stab them."

Terrorists often held the most senior roles in the gangs, which enforced rules such as wearing underpants in the shower and a ban on cooking bacon. Prisoners who could speak Arabic or learn passages of the Koran were favoured in the ranks, while beatings were used to force inmates to convert to Islam and join the gangs.

Leaders of the gangs were believed to be instigators of much prison violence but kept themselves out of trouble by ordering enforcers and foot soldiers to carry out the attacks. Gang members were also believed to control the movement of contraband such as mobile phones and drugs. Money was made by "taxing" inmates, the report said.

Inmates who tried to quit gangs faced punishment, the most serious of which was for denouncing Islam, it added. One prisoner said: "If I said I didn't want to be a Muslim, I'd need to watch out in case someone stabbed me."

There were 13,008 Muslim prisoners in England and Wales at the end of March, about 15 per cent of the total jail population. At the end of last year 175 prisoners were serving sentences for terrorist offences linked to Islamist extremism.

In some top-security jails the proportion of Muslim inmates was higher. About 42 per cent of Whitemoor prison in March, Cambridgeshire, and 31 per cent at Long Lartin in Worcestershire were Muslim. Three "jails within a jail", known as jihadi jails, had been set up to house up to 28 subversive and proselytising Islamist inmates.

Steve Gillan, general secretary of the Prison Officers Association, said: "We have been warning for some time about the growth of a gang culture, whether it is the so-called Muslim brotherhood or others. It is alarming that this report shows that gang culture is now rife within the high-security prisons."