

Yes, Left-Wingers, We Do Need Prisons

substack.com, by John Hawkins, August 7, 2026

Back in 2023, I did a post called “[Why Can’t Everything Be Free?](#)” and people were asking, “Is this how far our society has gone downhill? Are there people so dumb that we need to explain to them why everything can’t just be free?”

Yes, there are.

Many of them are probably the same people who think that we don’t need prisons. Now you might think people like that are just random idiots on Reddit, but many of these people are prominent on the Left.

Like whom?

Well, let me give you just a few examples.

Briahna Joy Gray, a political correspondent who used to be Bernie Sanders’ press secretary:

[Briahna keeps talking over everyone] "Abolish it all!"

MORGAN: "What about prisons? Would you abolish prisons?"

GRAY: "Oh, they're first on the list."



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Francesca Hong, who's running for governor of Wisconsin:

 **Brendan Hartnett**  @BrendanHartnett · Aug 4  ...

Favreau: "You also said your long-term vision is a world without **prisons**. How does that work?"

Francesca **Hong**: "What I know is attainable and the policies that actually meet the urgency of the moment and understanding the realities of it means that we have to ensure that we're funding out local government, that we're bringing justice to victims, and what may have been more aspirational is not primary. What we need to do is make sure that people all across Wisconsin have access to great public schools, out of school programs, mental health resources, and that we also hold law enforcement accountable, but also provide them with the training that they need to help prevent crime and stop crime."



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New Yorker Darializa Avila Chevalier, who was strongly supported by Bernie Sanders and Zohran Mamdani, will be representing a Democratic district in Congress starting in November:

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Democrat socialist candidate under fire for her plan to **abolish prisons**



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Zohran Mamdani, the current mayor of NYC, has said he doesn't even know what purpose prisons serve:



RNC Research 
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Zohran Mamdani on prisons: “Frankly, what purpose do they serve?”



So, how feasible is it to abolish prisons? Most of us would reflexively say, “It couldn’t work,” but is that true? Not necessarily.

What if we had a system where minor crimes required caning? Thieves that were caught would have to pay restitution for their crimes, have their hands chopped off, or become debt slaves. More serious crimes? Those would merit banishment, perhaps to some Third World hellhole that we could pay off to take the dregs of American society and, of course, we’d want to dramatically expand the death penalty.



Has anyone ever done anything like this since humanity got past the tribe/small town state of development? Sort of.

Ireland, along with some places in Africa, tried this.

However, it has been hundreds of years since any society fully abandoned the idea of jails. That’s largely because a system without prisons obviously tended to make a lot more sense when we lived in small groups, and everyone knew each other.

When a group of humans was 150 people who saw each other every day and took orders from a chieftain, if somebody stole 4 chickens (“I bet it was that damn Bill again!”), they had much less of a chance of getting away with it, which made them less likely to commit a crime in the first place. If Bill was a useless criminal, he might be told he could leave the tribe or die, which often ended up being basically the same thing.

In a country with 342 million people that stretches 2,800 miles coast-to-coast, you don’t have the familiarity with the people around you that made these systems more feasible when we were divided into tribes.

It’s also worth noting that many of the things I suggested above COULD BE DONE NOW as an alternative to prison. We could start caning people by the tens of thousands as an alternative to jail, executing them by the tens of thousands, and banishing career criminals from the country. Conservatives aren’t the brake on that. I wouldn’t be surprised if three-quarters of conservatives would support all of those ideas if they thought they could be implemented.

The people who don’t want to do any of those things are the same left-wingers that want to abolish prisons and defund the police. Liberals may love aborting innocent babies, but they hate the idea of putting people like Ted Bundy to death. Caning? You’ve got to be kidding me. Deporting American criminals? Liberals don’t even want to deport illegal aliens who aren’t supposed to be in our country in the first place.

So, you may ask, “What is their alternative to prisons?”

Mostly it’s childlike naivete. You know, “We’ll get them counseling, help them understand that they hurt people, and give them more societal support and soon they’ll become some of our best citizens!”

The fact that in places like NYC, where you have career criminals with 40+ arrests that have been coddled for a decade plus, still roaming around and causing havoc on the subways doesn’t faze them at all.

It’ll just magically work somehow.

Well, you may say, “What’s their answer for the worst of the worst? The serial killers, mass murderers and serial rapists?”

From what I’ve seen, the prison abolitionists really don’t have one. They just know that being against putting people in prison makes them sound kind and compassionate, so details like that will be figured out later.

So, what would happen if they really got their way and there were no more prisons?

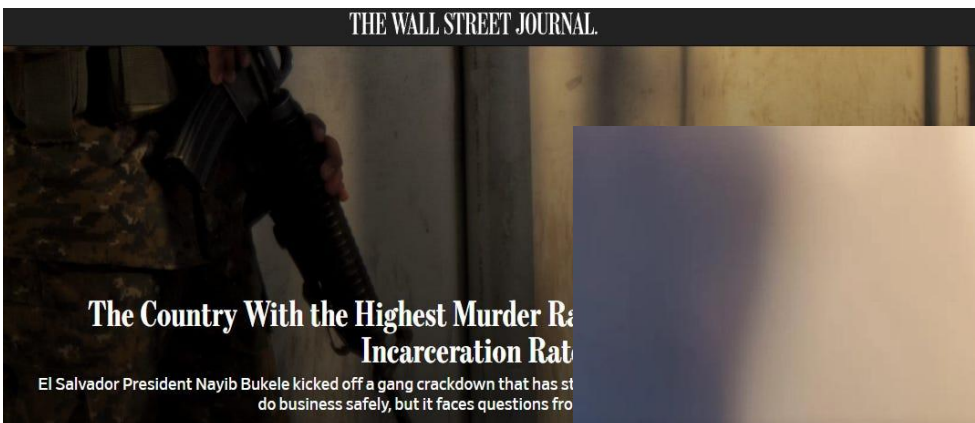
Well, murders would soar into the stratosphere by necessity because if the law won't keep order, other people will need to step up to create order. Think "Hatfields and McCoys" or "Shootout at the O.K. Corral":



You kill my cousin, and you're getting off with some counseling? The only way to get justice for him is to kill you. One of your guys killed one of our guys? Then we need to kill three of yours to send a message. What are you going to do? Send a social worker to tell us that's bad? Lol.

There's a reason every society on earth today either puts people in prison themselves, or if they're tiny enough, like say the Vatican, they ship people out to be imprisoned elsewhere.

It works. Criminals that go to prison can't commit more crimes against the public while they're in prison. It's also a strong deterrent to crime because almost nobody wants to end up in prison. If you don't believe that, look at El Salvador, which has gone from "the murder capital of the world" to a safe vacation spot since Nayib Bukele took over and jailed every gang member they could catch:



Abolish prisons? No. Put more career criminals in prison for

much longer time periods. That is a much better way to address crime.

