

The three-judge district court composed of Judges Reinhardt, Karlton, and Henderson, following two years of proceedings including fourteen days of trial, issued an opinion that imposes a population cap on California's prisons. The court found that the cap is necessary to cure the constitutional violations that have long existed with respect to the provision of medical and mental health care. The court found overcrowding to be the primary cause of these violations. It approved a population limit of 137.5% of design capacity, and it ordered the state to submit a plan as to how best it can reduce the current prison population from its present level of more than 190% of design capacity. No immediate release of prisoners was ordered. Rather, the reduction in prison population of over 40,000 may be accomplished by the state over a two-year period, through a combination of various measures previously recommended by numerous state commissions and committees, including through the early release of some non-dangerous prisoners or the diversion to other forms of custody or supervision of other individuals, such as technical parole violators who are currently returned to prison for short periods. The court found that the overcrowding in the prisons led to "criminogenic" conditions, which resulted in more crimes being committed by former prisoners and an increase in the recidivism rate. It also determined that, with adequate safeguards and improved rehabilitation and re-entry programs, the state could ensure that the order would result in an increase in public safety.

** This summary constitutes no part of the opinion of the court. It has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the reader.*