# U.S. Supreme Court Denies California Officials Immunity in San Quentin COVID-19 Outbreak Lawsuits



The U.S. Supreme Court has rejected an appeal from California corrections officials seeking immunity against lawsuits over a deadly COVID-19 outbreak at San Quentin State Prison in 2020. This decision allows the continuation of four lawsuits brought by relatives of deceased inmates and survivors of the outbreak, who claim the officials showed deliberate indifference to inmate health.

The outbreak at San Quentin, located north of San Francisco, resulted after a botched transfer of inmates from another prison in Southern California in May 2020, despite San Quentin having no previous cases. This misstep led to COVID-19 infecting approximately 75% of the inmate population at San Quentin, resulting in the deaths of 28 inmates and one correctional officer.

In response to the incident, California workplace safety regulators imposed a $421,880 fine on San Quentin in 2021 for failing to adhere to pandemic safety protocols, marking one of the largest penalties related to COVID-19 against an employer at the time.

The denial of the immunity appeal by the Supreme Court, decided without comment or dissent, upholds lower court rulings and means the state of California will continue to face these legal challenges. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has declined to comment on the ongoing litigation.