# Scottish prisoners allowed to watch violent and X-rated films despite safety concerns



In the heart of Scotland's penal system, inmates at HMP Barlinnie are reportedly enjoying access to an extensive library of X-rated films and violent television series that raise significant concerns among prison officials and the public alike. The films available include graphic depictions of serial killers, extreme violence, and drug use—a stark contrast to the restrictions imposed in English prisons, where such content has been banned since 2013.

The list of films available to prisoners is troubling, showcasing titles like "Saw," "Silence of the Lambs," and the American television series "Dexter," which centres around a forensic officer who moonlights as a vigilante serial killer. This access to extreme content, documented through Freedom of Information requests, has sparked a debate about the appropriateness of such a policy in a rehabilitation-focused environment.

A concerning backdrop is the state of violence within Scottish prisons, especially at Barlinnie, which has recorded an average of over 250 assaults on prison staff annually over the past decade. Recent incidents, including a plot by convicted murderer Robert Paterson to seriously assault a guard, highlight the volatile atmosphere within these facilities. In this light, prison officers have voiced urgent calls for the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to reevaluate the accessibility of violent and sexually explicit films, suggesting that they could exacerbate existing tensions among inmates.

Prison officers argue that the nature of these films—as violent as they are sexual—only serves to fuel an already combustible environment marked by overcrowding and rampant drug use. A spokesperson for the Prison Officer’s Association underscored the need for the SPS to act swiftly, stating that consideration must be given to what films contribute to the overall climate within the prison and the potential risks they pose.

Compounding the concern is a wider political response led by the Scottish Conservatives, who have urged the Scottish National Party to step in and mandate the removal of these films from prisoner access. Justice spokesman Liam Kerr expressed disbelief that such material remains available in Scottish prisons, particularly given the violent histories of many inmates. He contended that exposure to graphic content does not aid in rehabilitation and offers little support to those attempting to overcome substance abuse challenges.

The availability of violent films is not isolated to HMP Barlinnie. For instance, HMP Shotts houses a similar range of 370 DVDs, including titles renowned for their extreme brutality like "Black Death" and "Kill Bill." Reports indicate that across the Scottish prison system, over 4,100 DVDs and 470 computer games are accessible to inmates, fostering an unsettling culture in what should be a rehabilitative setting.

The SPS has defended its policies by asserting that access to DVDs is a privilege and not a right, determined at the discretion of the prison governor. However, the appropriateness of this approach is increasingly being called into question as experts and advocacy groups argue that exposure to such content undermines reformative efforts and takes a toll on inmate rehabilitation.

Similar controversies have arisen in other prisons, such as HMP Glenochil, where convicted sex offenders were allowed access to pornographic material, raising alarm bells among sexual violence charities and reform advocates. With policies varying significantly not just across the UK but within Scotland's own penal system, the debate over what constitutes reasonable access to media in prisons continues to unfold, reflecting broader societal concerns over crime, punishment, and rehabilitation.

As calls for action grow louder, the future of inmate access to violent and sexually explicit films remains uncertain, bound by the intricate dynamics of prison culture, rehabilitation, and public safety.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.sps.gov.uk/prisons/barlinnie)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/violent-inmates-maximum-security-scots-5084853), [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515), [[2]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/violent-inmates-maximum-security-scots-5084853), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/convicted-sex-offenders-allowed-pornography-in-hmp-glenochil-one-scottish-prison-a6988996.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9437551/Inmates-can-watch-rape-and-jailbreak-films-in-prison-DVD-collection.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/convicted-sex-offenders-allowed-pornography-in-hmp-glenochil-one-scottish-prison-a6988996.html), [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/violent-inmates-maximum-security-scots-5084853> - Inmates at HMP Shotts, a maximum-security Scottish prison, have access to over 370 DVDs, including violent 18-rated movies. Notably, the film 'Black Death' is a favourite among prisoners. The prison houses some of Scotland's most violent criminals, such as Luke Mitchell and gangland hitmen Raymond Anderson and James McDonald. The DVD collection includes titles like 'Snatch', 'American Gangster', and 'Kill Bill', featuring scenes of extreme violence and murder. Documentaries on serial killers, including Dennis Nilsen, Fred and Rose West, and the Yorkshire Ripper, are also available. The availability of such content has raised concerns about its appropriateness in a rehabilitative environment. ([dailyrecord.co.uk](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/violent-inmates-maximum-security-scots-5084853?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515> - Documents revealed that inmates in Scottish prisons have access to a vast library of violent horror movies and shoot-em-up computer games. Prisoners, including murderers and rapists, can choose from over 4,100 DVDs and 470 computer games across the Scottish prison system. Titles include 'Snatch' and 'Grand Theft Auto IV'. The Scottish Prison Service stated that access to DVDs is a privilege, not a right, and is available at the discretion of the Governor. ([scotsman.com](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.sps.gov.uk/prisons/barlinnie> - HMP Barlinnie is Scotland's largest prison, housing male prisoners from the west of Scotland. It accommodates remand and convicted prisoners of all sentence lengths, including a national top end for life sentence or long-term prisoners nearing potential release. The prison offers various facilities and services to inmates, including in-cell televisions with built-in DVD players. ([sps.gov.uk](https://www.sps.gov.uk/prisons/barlinnie?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9437551/Inmates-can-watch-rape-and-jailbreak-films-in-prison-DVD-collection.html> - Prisoners at HMP Usk in Monmouthshire, South Wales, have access to a library of 550 films, many depicting sexual violence and gangland crime. Titles include 'Deliverance', featuring a notorious male rape scene, and 'Thelma & Louise', which shows an attempted rape. The DVD collection was condemned as 'completely and utterly inappropriate' by prison experts and leading politicians. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/9437551/Inmates-can-watch-rape-and-jailbreak-films-in-prison-DVD-collection.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/convicted-sex-offenders-allowed-pornography-in-hmp-glenochil-one-scottish-prison-a6988996.html> - Convicted sex offenders at HMP Glenochil, near Tullibody, Scotland, have been allowed to access pornographic magazines as part of an agreement with the prison's governor. The decision has been criticised by sexual violence charities, which argue that such material reinforces harmful attitudes towards women and undermines rehabilitation efforts. ([independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/convicted-sex-offenders-allowed-pornography-in-hmp-glenochil-one-scottish-prison-a6988996.html?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk/publications/report-hmp-barlinnie-follow-inspection-8-12-july-2013> - The HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland conducted a follow-up inspection of HMP Barlinnie from 8-12 July 2013. The report highlighted areas of good practice, including the availability of in-cell televisions with built-in DVD players in the First Night in Custody (FNIC) centre. However, it noted the absence of a small library of foreign language books for prisoners in the FNIC centre. ([prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk](https://prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk/publications/report-hmp-barlinnie-follow-inspection-8-12-july-2013?utm_source=openai))