



International Centre for Prison Studies

ICPS NEWS DIGEST

15th Edition – May – June 2013

Welcome to the fifteenth edition of the ICPS News Digest, a selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. We aim in the Digest to cover all regions and include new developments in policy and practice, as well as information from official and intergovernmental bodies. The Digest is produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 May to 30 June. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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Prison populations

A report by the Council of [Europe](#) suggests that prison populations and overcrowding in member states are linked to sentence length and not to the number of people imprisoned. The study found that the most overcrowded prisons are found in southern and eastern European states even though fewer people are sentenced compared to Nordic countries. More people are imprisoned on average in the Nordic countries than in Italy or Spain but serve much shorter sentences. The report also found that half of [Europe](#)'s prisons are overcrowded and all are operating at full capacity, despite a two percent drop in the total prisoner population across the continent compared to the previous year.

The European Court of Human Rights has rejected [Italy](#)'s appeal against a ruling it made in January ordering the country to pay compensation to seven prisoners who were held in severely overcrowded conditions. The ruling means that Italy has a year to find a solution to the overcrowding and to implement a procedure for paying damages to victims. The [Italian](#) government has since passed a decree to reduce pre-trial detention and encourage the use of alternatives to imprisonment for minor offences. A plan to re-open a maximum security prison on the remote [Italian](#) island of Pianosa is also being considered.

The prison population in [France](#) has reached its highest level, with nearly 68,000 prisoners, around 17,000 of whom are awaiting trial. The prisons have an official capacity of around 57,000 prisoners meaning there are 118 prisoners per 100 places. Concerns about the levels of overcrowding and rising violence led to [French](#) prison guards gathering in front of more than 100 prisons to protest. They blocked deliveries and set fire to tires, wooden pallets and other objects in order to make the authorities aware of the urgency of the situation.

[Portuguese](#) prisons are becoming overcrowded and filled with young prisoners, while there are fewer and older guards according to the National Union of Prison Guards at a recent demonstration, noting that safety, order and balance in the prison system are becoming more and more jeopardised. There are currently more than 14,000 prisoners in Portugal, in prisons with capacity for 12,000.

The chief prosecutor in Thessaloniki, northern [Greece](#), has written to the justice minister to advise him that the prisons have reached the point where they are unable to admit remand prisoners, and the city's police station is holding 400 remand and convicted prisoners in their cells. He added that the risk of riots and uprisings is high.

The [Colombian](#) government has declared a state of emergency in the country's prisons as they hold over 40,000 prisoners more than their capacity. The Ministry of Justice is meeting with the Penitentiary and Prison National Institute (Inpec) to discuss what measures should be taken to tackle the overcrowding crisis.

In the [US](#) a panel of Federal judges has ordered California Governor Jerry Brown to release thousands of state prisoners before their full sentences are served. The order, which would apply to those prisoners who have behaved well, could lower the prison population by more than 5,000 people by the end of 2013. Overall the judges want prisoner numbers reduced from 119,000 in June to about 110,000 by the end of the year.

The [Turkish](#) Justice Ministry has announced that there are over 130,000 prisoners in the country's prisons. In 2002 there were around 55,000 prisoners. The AK Party government is pressing ahead with four judicial reform packages which include measures to shorten periods of detention and accelerate trials, but these have not yet led to a reduction in the number of those imprisoned.

The [Zambian](#) Human Rights Commission has commended the President for commuting 113 death sentences to life imprisonment and for pardoning 615 prisoners on the commemoration of Africa Freedom Day.

The [Kenyan](#) government has announced plans to release up to 15,000 prisoners across the country to reduce prison congestion and facilitate rehabilitation of prisoners. Prisoners serving sentences of a maximum of three years will be targeted for release. They will be remanded to community service to aid their reintegration back into society.

The junior justice minister In the [Netherlands](#) has revised his plans to close 26 prisons, relieving seven from the closure list. The plan to close prisons and replace some jails terms with electronic tagging has been widely condemned by legal experts, unions and the prison

service. According to the minister, the revised plan will mean the loss of 2,000 jobs and will result in savings of €271 million. [Dutch](#) civil servants have described the plans as unrealistic, the Council of the Judiciary has said the minister is encroaching on the role of judges who are charged with determining sentences, and the [Dutch](#) Council for Criminal Law and Youth Protection has said the plans will impact on public safety.

A delegation of the Superior Council of the Judiciary in [Haiti](#) visited the country's largest prison complex, the National Penitentiary, and discovered that of the 3,952 prisoners only 181 (4.6 percent) were tried and convicted.

A report from [India](#) suggests that at the time of the country's Independence in 1947, the prison population comprised one third pre-trial and two-thirds sentenced prisoners. This trend has been reversed and currently nearly two-thirds of the prisoners are unconvicted and only one third convicted. The Supreme Court has observed that in a large number of cases, pre-trial detention was found to be avoidable and unnecessary.

[Australia](#)'s first dedicated prison for the elderly may be built in western Victoria as the state considers how to handle the advancing age of its prison population. The town of Ararat has proposed hosting a nursing home for geriatric prisoners next to the town's hospital and the state government has welcomed the idea. A spokesman for the Corrections Minister said the government recognised the problem but it is not a priority until overall prison capacity issues are dealt with first. Last year the auditor general warned of a shortfall of 1,400 prison beds within four years.

The Home Ministry of [Malaysia](#) is working out ways to reduce the number of foreigners held in the country's prisons. The Home Minister noted that 29.4 percent of the 39,144 prisoners were foreigners, and that the money spent on them could be better spent on Malaysian citizens. He added that most of the foreign prisoners were there for immigration offences such as overstaying or not having valid work permits, and that prisoner exchange discussions were underway with Thailand and would later be expanded to Indonesia.

Changes in prison population levels – report by Roy Walmsley, Director of the [World Prison Brief](#)

There are now three countries that have prison population rates (per 100,000 of the national population) of over 700. The rate in the U.S.A. has fallen to 716 but the rates in the Seychelles and in St Kitts and Nevis have risen to 709 and 701 respectively. All three are well above the fourth highest (the U.S. Virgin Islands) whose rate is 539. The prison population in the Russian Federation continues to fall; its rate is now 481, which is the eighth highest.

The prison population of Georgia has fallen dramatically over the last fifteen months. At the beginning of 2012 the total was over 24,000 and the rate per 100,000 of the national population was 536 - the highest in Europe at the time. By the end of the year the total had fallen to 19,350 but an amnesty, approved by Parliament at the end of December 2012, reduced the prison population to 10,202 at the end of April 2013 - a rate per 100,000 of 224.

Another country registering a remarkable reduction in the prison population is Burundi in East Africa. At the end of June 2012 the total was over 10,400, accommodated in space for 4,000 prisoners. However, by the end of the year the total had fallen below 6,600. This is a result of an initiative by the Ministry of Justice, the Belgian Development Agency (BTC), the prison administration and the United Nations Office in Burundi. The total continued to fall in the first months of 2013.

As reported in previous Digests the prison population in the Czech Republic was greatly reduced by the President's New Year amnesty. The total fell from 22,641 to 16,310 in the first ten days of this year and has now stabilized at about 16,200.

The Caribbean continues to be the area where most countries have high prison population rates. In addition to St Kitts and Nevis and the U.S. Virgin Islands (mentioned above) there are now another six countries with rates over 400 and eight more with rates over 300. Haiti is the only Caribbean country with a rate below the world average.

Proportion of pre-trial/remand prisoners and of women prisoners

The proportion of pre-trial/remand prisoners within the prison population is particularly high in Africa and in some countries of South America and South Asia. More than half the prison population has that legal status in twenty African countries, in seven countries of South America - Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela and in five countries on the Indian sub-continent - Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In ten countries more than 70% of the prison population is in pre-trial/remand detention – Libya (89%), Bolivia (84%), Democratic Republic of Congo (82%), Liberia (78%) and also Benin, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Haiti, Paraguay and Yemen.

The proportion of women prisoners within the prison population is particularly high in some Asian countries. Of the sixteen countries in the world where more than 10% of the prison population is female, ten are in that continent, including Hong Kong (19%), Macau (16%), Qatar and Thailand (both 15%).

Health

Mentally ill people are being held in Western [Australian](#) jails indefinitely under legislation described as “medieval”. Under the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act, accused individuals deemed to be of “unsound mind” due to mental illness or intellectual disability can be put into mainstream prisons with no specified release date. The state government recently announced it would build two centres to house people with intellectual disabilities who were charged with crimes but were unable to make a plea. However most of the 17 people in jail under the MIA Act have a mental illness and are not eligible for release into the disability justice centres.

In June 2012 the [New Zealand](#) Corrections Department introduced a new screening tool to identify prisoners' mental health needs, leading to improvements in their care. In the ten months to the end of April 2013, use of the Tool led to 653 prisoners being referred for

appropriate health care for their mental health needs. All prisoners over the age of 18 are screened within seven days of entry into prison and are referred to Forensic Services if they screen as positive. Those assessed as having a mild or moderate mental health need are treated in prison by a prison nurse or Medical Officer, while those with a serious mental health problem remain under Forensic Services for ongoing treatment.

The [US](#) Bureau of Prisons lacks clear standards on when to grant compassionate release to prisoners with terminal illnesses and limited life expectancies, the Justice Department's inspector general has reported. In a study of 206 such requests between 2006 and 2011 the director of federal prisons approved 142 releases and denied 36. In 28 cases the prisoners died before a decision was made. The inspector reported that the Bureau's compassionate release programme is "poorly managed" and its implementation "has likely resulted in potentially eligible inmates not being considered for release." The Bureau is reviewing its procedures.

The self-inflicted death of a Romanian man in an [Italian](#) prison has drawn attention to the problem of suicides in the country's prisons. According to the Permanent Observatory on Prison Deaths, out of the 83 people who have died in jails across Italy since the beginning of the year, 27 took their own life. Half of those were foreign prisoners. The Observatory said prisoner suicides in the country are 20 times that of the general population.

The International Prison Observatory has reported that the prison suicide rate in [France](#) is higher than in most Eurozone nations. There were 15.5 suicides for every 10,000 French prisoners in 2010, more than double the average of 6.7 per 10,000 prisoners across Eurozone countries.

A major review of deaths in custody in [Australia](#) has found a substantial increase in the number of Aboriginal people dying in custody over the past five years. The Australian Institute of Criminology study found the overall rates of deaths in state and territory prisons has remained relatively steady over the past 20 years, but there has been a spike in the number of Indigenous deaths in custody, in line with the almost doubling of the number of Aboriginal Australians being imprisoned. The report showed that most of the deaths were due to natural causes.

A news agency has reported that at least 208 prisoners died of AIDS in [Mozambique's](#) prisons last year, despite there being 15 health units in prisons. The Penal Control Director in the Ministry of Justice said that a total of 24 professionals are employed in prisons and include doctors, medical technicians, nurses and psychiatrists. He added that prisoners are guaranteed treatment with anti-retroviral drugs and are monitored by qualified doctors.

A health official in [Zimbabwe](#) has reported that the HIV prevalence rate in the country's prisons stands at 27 percent, nearly double the rate of 15 percent in the general population. Women prisoners were worst affected with a prevalence rate of around 39 percent compared to 18 percent in the community. The Zimbabwe Prisons Service has said it would not allow preventative measures such as condoms in prisons, claiming it is tantamount to legalising illicit behaviour.

The Commissioner General of Prisons in [Uganda](#) has reported that more prison staff die of HIV/AIDS than prisoners, noting that the prisoners are quick to find out their HIV status and therefore can access treatment and counselling while staff do not do so because of the stigma of the illness.

Two new buildings at Prey Sar's Correctional Centre 2 in [Cambodia](#) have been inaugurated to house the 509 women and 161 children held at the prison. Tuberculosis is prevalent at the prison, with rates six times higher than in the general population, and children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to it. Previously they had been living in three rooms in the prison's health centre where they were held alongside prisoners with TB and HIV.

Jail authorities in Kannur, [India](#), are set to expand the telemedicine facilities at the central prison to help address the health issues of prisoners. On average 40 prisoners a day access the service, which includes psychiatric treatment and general medicine, when it is in operation. Previously prisoners were often unable to access health care due to the lack of availability of escort services to take them out to hospitals.

The Head of the [Russian](#) Federal Drug Control Service has reported that one third of the country's prisoners are there for crimes relating to their drug addiction. He said that effective mechanisms need to be developed to combat the spread of drugs in prison to ensure that prisoners do not turn to criminal activity to obtain drugs when they are released.

Treatment of prisoners

A prisoners union has been set up in [Argentina](#) to defend the rights of prisoners. The union is the first of its kind and is being monitored by the International Labour Organisation to see if it is an initiative that could work in other countries. The union has lodged various appeals against deductions being made to prisoners pay meaning they do not receive the national minimum wage to which they are entitled. It is demanding that proper clothing and footwear be issued to workers for health and safety reasons and is negotiating payment of six months unemployment benefit for newly released prisoners.

A judge in [France](#) took the step of freeing a prisoner because wind and rain were blowing into his cell, soaking him as he slept. The judge visited the prisoner and found he shared a cell measuring nine square metres with another prisoner, there was a hole in the ceiling where wind and rain came through and the prisoners had to share one table and chair.

Three prisoners on death row at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in the [US](#) have filed a lawsuit against jail officials due to "appalling and extreme conditions... as a result of extreme heat" in the prison. According to the lawsuit documents, the heat index – or how hot "it feels" – on death row reached 195 degrees Fahrenheit on more than one occasion in the summer of 2011. In the summer of 2012 it was above 126 degrees on 85 days between May and August. The lawsuit requests that corrections officials work with the warden and jail staff to mitigate the "extreme and unsafe" temperatures and humidity in the death row facility.

A court document describing the current conditions at Golden Grove Adult Correctional Facility in the [US Virgin Islands](#) presents a worrying picture of conditions there for staff and prisoners. Among other things the document describes how there is a failure to implement security procedures such as making sure the doors are locked meaning the prison is chaotic and dangerous and prisoners live in a constant state of fear that they will be attacked by other prisoners. It also describes how conditions at the prison violate contemporary standards of human decency, placing prisoners at serious risk of being attacked, of being hurt or killed in a fire, and of suffering serious harm from illness, injury, infection, or from failure to address serious medical and mental health issues.

Prison officials at a penal colony for former policeman in eastern [Russia](#) reported that 400 prisoners staged a protest against conditions at the facility. The prisoners were complaining about high prices in the prison shop, the parole system and medical services. They ended their protest after they were allowed to meet with journalists and prison officials to publicly air their complaints.

The [US](#) Government Accounting Office (GAO) has released a report on the use of solitary confinement in the federal prison system. The report found that more than 80,000 prisoners are held in solitary confinement or restricted housing across the US on any given day. According to the report, no Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) official would acknowledge that long-term segregation may have detrimental effects on prisoners, and found that the BOP has not conducted any research to determine whether the practice has an adverse impact on prisoners or contributes to maintaining prison safety.

Over 100 prisoners in [Israeli](#) prisons have been held in complete isolation for months or years in harsh conditions, a debate in the Knesset Interior Committee has revealed. The prisoners include ten minors, some of whom see no one but the prison staff who feed them through the window of their cell door. In seven of these cases a judge did not approve the decision to isolate them from other prisoners. The Attorney General has said that the cases of these isolated prisoners need to be looked into.

A [South African](#) prison run by British security company G4S is illegally holding prisoners in isolation for up to three years and denying them life-saving medication, according to a confidential South African government report. The report lists 62 prisoners who were detained in single cells for periods ranging from two weeks to three years, against prison rules. Two of them were not given essential HIV and TB medication. It is illegal to segregate prisoners as punishment. The practice can be imposed under certain conditions, for example if the prisoner is an escape risk or a threat to other prisoners, but it must be reported to prison inspectors. The prisoner must also be visited by a nurse, psychologist or medical practitioner every day. According to the report the prison management ignored all of these stipulations.

A report by the ombudsman in South [Australia](#) says restraining a prisoner to a bed for 22 hours each day was against national and international standards. The prisoner had been transferred from Adelaide's women's prison in July 2011 and spent most of her eight month stint at Yatala Labour Prison, a men's facility, handcuffed to a bed for most of every day, as

well as during medical visits and while receiving communion. The head of the Correctional Service said the woman had been restrained because she was repeatedly engaging in self-harming behaviour. The case has been put to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

The [Russian](#) Prosecutor General has called for a reform of the prison system, noting that the number of complaints lodged by prisoners with the European Court of Human Rights is increasing year upon year. Additionally official statistics show that more than 43,000 violations in detention conditions were discovered in 2012, and nearly 4,000 people died while in custody.

In Ontario, [Canada](#), some jail guards are brutalising prisoners and covering up the abuse by destroying or falsifying records and intimidating colleagues, according to the ombudsman. The report found that part of the problem was overcrowding and understaffing in the province's prisons that exacerbate tensions, and makes 45 recommendations to the provincial government to end the "dysfunctional culture", including better staff training, especially in dealing with prisoners with mental health issues or other special needs.

Women prisoners at Mukobeko Maximum Prison in [Zambia](#) are protesting against the prison authorities' practice of carrying out intimate searches on them. They claim that the searches are routinely carried out on all prisoners on a Saturday and they are appealing to the Human Rights Commission and the government to investigate the matter, saying that the practice was humiliating especially as elderly prisoners were also subjected to the searches.

Teenagers imprisoned in the [US](#) are frequently, and often repeatedly, raped in juvenile detention centers throughout the country, according to a US Department of Justice survey. The survey polled group homes and jails for troubled youths and found that the teenagers were most often victimised by staff and counsellors. Twenty percent of the respondents said they were assaulted more than ten times. Over 8,500 boys and girls under 18 were questioned, with 1,720 reporting they had been assaulted. Also in the [US](#), a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that female and LGBT prisoners in prisons and jails, as well as prisoners identified as having mental health problems, are more likely to report sexual victimisation. An estimated 80,000 prisoners – 57,900 in prisons and 22,700 in jails – reported one or more incidents of sexual victimisation by another prisoner or staff member within the previous 12 months or since they were admitted to a facility.

The [Turkish](#) parliament's human rights commission will perform inspections at a number of prisons following reports of torture and ill treatment at a juvenile prison in Izmir. The Progressive Lawyers Association claimed children were kept isolated for days and months in cells as small as three square metres. It also cited emotional abuse, denial of medical assistance and severe beatings, including one instance where a prison warden had beaten a prisoner with a hose.

A report by the rights group Licadho reveals that [Cambodian](#) prisoners are trying to avoid being taken to Phnom Penh for their appeal court hearings because the General Department of Prisons is failing to ensure they are returned to their provincial prisons, causing prisoners to remain imprisoned far from their families. The report also found that

Phnom Penh municipality's already overstretched prison system has to accommodate these extra prisoners.

The [Estonian](#) Justice Ministry has announced that the minimum space requirement for each prisoner is to be increased from 2.5 square metres to three square metres from 2014. Updating the old prisons to meet the new standards will mean reducing the capacity of the prisons by 190 places.

Prison violence

A [South African](#) parliamentary report into a two-day riot at Groenpunt prison which left 74 prisoners injured identifies major security failings on the part of the Correctional Services. In addition to cells not being closed ahead of the riot, the prison was understaffed and overcrowded, creating a 'perfect storm' of riot conditions. Prior to the riot prisoners had written to the prison's management to warn them that security was inadequate but the warnings were not heeded.

The union that represents prison staff in Victoria, [Australia](#), fears more violent attacks could take place at a prison in eastern Victoria unless prison management improves safety practices. Seven guards from Fulham Correctional Centre were admitted to hospital following a fight involving up to 30 prisoners. The union says the privately-run prison needs more staff and improved safety procedures.

There are calls to ensure gang members in prison in [New Zealand](#) are better dealt with after early reports suggest gang tensions are to blame for a riot at Spring Hill prison involving 29 prisoners which caused \$1 million worth of damage. A total of 117 prisoners have been relocated to other prisons following the incident. The Corrections Association has raised concerns that officers are not armed with appropriate protection to assist in such situations.

Police used tear gas on 200 rioting prisoners at a prison in [Panama](#) on 24 May. The prisoners were protesting against poor conditions at the facility. Following the riot ten prisoners were transferred to other prisons while dozens of remaining prisoners announced they would be going on hunger strike. It was the second prison riot in [Panama](#) in a week over poor conditions. The first was at an overcrowded women's prison which was built to hold 400 but was holding 1,000 prisoners. The prisoners rioted over conditions at the prison, lack of medical services, bad food and the amount of time spent awaiting trial.

Prisoners in the maximum security penal colony in Nevyansk, [Russia](#), barricaded themselves in and demanded the removal of the prison's officials, who they accused of authorising beatings. One of the prisoners posted a video statement describing the overall atmosphere of fear and violence in the prison, allegedly promoted by the administration. The prisoners also said they were illegally deprived of deliveries from home and meetings with relatives.

A report by [Venezuelan](#) Prison Watch has found that 2012 was the most violent in the country's prisons in the past 14 years, with 591 prisoners dying. The second most violent year was 2011 when 560 prisoners died, and the third 2007 when there were 498 deaths. In total 5,667 prisoners have died in Venezuelan prisons in the past 14 years.

A study has found that young offenders imprisoned in [Germany](#) rarely serve their sentence without getting involved in violence. In a research project that ran from 2010 to 2013 experts from the University of Cologne examined levels of violence in youth prisons and found that among the 900 prisoners interviewed, almost half admitted to having physically hurt a fellow prisoner in some form, while 70 percent said they had inflicted psychological violence on others at least once.

Developments in rehabilitation

The first national prison centre for young people in [Angola](#) has been inaugurated. The centre will accommodate people between the ages of 16 and 21 and will aim to socially integrate them through professional and academic training. The prison comprises an administrative area, a craftworks pavilion for training in carpentry, blacksmithing, computing and baking, and a six classroom primary school with a library.

A farm has been officially opened in prison colony 44 in [Kyrgyzstan](#) as part of a joint venture with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to create “income generation and rehabilitation schemes for prisoners.” The project aims to improve the quality of life of prisoners and to provide them with skills and knowledge for their lives after prison.

Prisoners at Malaybalay City Jail in the [Philippines](#) grow herbs, bell peppers, tomatoes, potatoes and pechay, as well as raising mallard ducks. The prisoners are paid for their work, with one prisoner saying he was able to send his daughter to college using the money he earned, and also learn new skills.

Twelve prisoners from Auckland Region Women’s Corrections Facility in [New Zealand](#) are working towards their forklift license in a move that will help them obtain employment on release. The women are part of a team working in the prison’s distribution centre, where forklifts are in daily use. As well as the forklift training, the prisoners are also working to achieve NZQA qualifications in distribution, literacy and numeracy. Also in [New Zealand](#), the Corrections Department has signed an agreement with Housing New Zealand wherein prisoners at Rolleston Prison will refurbish around 30 state-owned houses a year for five years. The refurbishment will take place in two \$4 million construction yards being built at the prison.

Fifty prisoners on the [Italian](#) prison island on Gorgona have started producing their own wine. The prisoners planted a vineyard and have now produced 2,700 bottles of white wine which will go on sale to restaurants and wine bars. The Minister for Justice has welcomed the project and said it could be replicated at other prisons. Also in [Italy](#), women’s prison workshops across the country are joining up under a new commercial fashion brand they hope will encourage more prisoners to learn the trade and give them hope for a future on release. The Sigillo brand will be available in shops within months. The women work three afternoons a week in a room with sewing machines and cutting tables, and receive a regular part time salary of 600 Euros a month.

Prisoners at Tiruchi Central Prison in [India](#) who work in the tailoring workshop have been assigned the task of stitching mosquito nets and hooded raincoats for the Police Department. Equipped with 15 sewing machines, the tailoring unit has been producing uniforms for prisoners across the state and will now produce the 4,000 nylon mosquito nets and 2,000 raincoats for the police. Prisoners receive wages for the work which is aimed at engaging them productively and also as a rehabilitation measure.

In [Saudi Arabia](#) the King Saud University in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior has embarked on an ambitious rehabilitation programme for current and former prisoners. The programme aims to give under 29 year olds basic skills that will enable them to better establish themselves in the community on release. The programme lasts for six weeks and is run by a group of 12 experts in psychology, sociology, social services and religion.

Sentencing and the law

Under [Hungary](#)'s new penal code, stricter punishments will be imposed on repeat perpetrators of violent crimes, but a variety of penalties will be available for those who commit petty crimes, including the possibility of a new form of short term custody which aims to give perpetrators "a taste of prison." The Justice Minister said the code was based on a "punishment in proportion with crime" approach but would give judges discretion to take into account the character of the accused as well as the circumstances of the crime.

The [Cuban](#) government has announced that it will amend its Penal Code and Penal Proceedings Law to bring them up to date. The new legislation will bring a measure of leniency to court rulings in cases where "the perpetrator does not represent a menace to society, owing to the individual characteristics of the infringer and the nature and repercussions of the crime", and will offer alternatives to imprisonment. The new legislation will also offer legal guarantees to those accused of crimes who suffer from mental illnesses.

The President of the [Philippines](#) has enacted a law to amend certain provisions of the penal code to allow prisoners to earn time off their sentences for good behaviour. In the first two months of imprisonment a prisoner is entitled to a deduction of 20 days from their sentence for each month of good behaviour. This is increased to 23 days for the third to fifth year, 25 days in the sixth to tenth years, and 30 days from the eleventh year onwards. Prisoners will also be able to earn an additional deduction of 15 days for each month of study, teaching or mentoring they undertake.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the [Tongan](#) Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Police which will allow offenders who are sentenced to Community Service Orders to carry them out under police supervision as an alternative to a custodial sentence. The initiative will relieve the workload on the Probation Unit, which only has four staff members, and it is hoped it will reduce the prison population.

In [Australia](#), under a bill to be introduced to the Victoria State Parliament, people breaching their parole conditions will face further penalties, including a possible extra three months in prison and a fine of up to \$4,200. The bill would give police new powers to arrest and charge

a parolee for a breach of parole conditions such as drinking alcohol if a ban has been put in place, whether or not the breach involves a further crime.

Following complaints about disparities in sentencing in [Uganda](#), the Chief Justice instituted a 25 member committee to produce sentencing guidelines, which have now been launched. The guidelines take immediate effect and are designed to promote uniformity, consistency and transparency in sentencing.

In the [US](#), an audit of the Colorado Department of Corrections has revealed that hundreds of prisoners have been given incorrect sentences, meaning some newly released parolees will be made to return to prison while others have been in prison too long. Some of the sentences are erroneous because a judicial clerk gave an incorrect statement to the corrections department while in other instances prison officials misread the documents.

The [Irish](#) Justice Minister has criticised the judiciary for sending too many people to prison. He said some 88 percent of those sent to prison in 2012 were sentenced to one year or less and said it is of crucial importance that judges exercise their independent discretion. He hoped that the courts would make greater use of Community Service Orders when appropriate.

The [New Zealand](#) Justice Minister has denied that prisoners' rights are being breached in new legislation which is the subject of a complaint to the United Nations. The law allows victims and the legal aid system to dip into compensation awarded to prisoners. The complaint alleges that the legislation breaches a UN convention against torture and mistreatment of prisoners, but the Minister says because the law doesn't stop the court awarding compensation for a breach of human rights it does not break the UN convention.

Remand prisoners in [Trinidad and Tobago](#) can now have their cases heard more quickly if they are willing to plead guilty. Some prisoners at the Maximum Security Prison said they have to wait between eight and ten years for their trials to begin.

[Australia](#)'s highest court will consider the relevance of Aboriginality and social deprivation in criminal sentencing after a New South Wales man who has spent most of his adult life in prison was granted special leave to appeal against an assault conviction. The man's lawyers convinced the High Court that his case was a suitable vehicle for considering the fundamental question of equality before the law amid a national crisis of indigenous over-representation in prisons and chronic Aboriginal social disadvantage.

[Saudi Arabia](#) has enacted tough laws which will allow the courts to order the deportation of all expatriate offenders who are sentenced to three months or more in prison or to 40 lashes. Those who are sentenced to under three months will be required to submit a written letter pledging not to repeat the offence if they will be deported.

The [Zimbabwean](#) Attorney General has said the government is making provisions to divert cases involving juveniles from the formal justice system to extra-judicial programmes as a way of protecting minors. The programme will target young people under the age of 21 who have been arrested for offences not considered to be serious, and which would ordinarily

attract a sentence of 12 months or less within the formal criminal justice system. The programme aims at providing children with the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour whilst also addressing the other social, family and community factors that were contributing to their behaviour.

The new National Committee for Combating Addiction in [Lebanon](#) reviews cases involving drug use – not buying or selling – with a view towards rehabilitation rather than punishment. Individuals charged with drug use have the option to petition the committee for treatment at an approved facility at the government's expense in place of punishment. The Committee has processed 37 cases since it began work at the beginning of 2013.

The [Dominican Republic](#) has inaugurated a pilot project called Treatment Under Judicial Supervision, with support from the Organisation of American States, as an alternative to imprisonment for drug dependent offenders. Under the project, drug dependent people accused of non-violent crimes can be conditionally diverted to treatment instead of prison, with the goal of managing relapses into drug addiction, reducing the risk of repeat offences, lowering the prison population and decreasing government expenditure on imprisonment.

Prison policy

The [Australian](#) Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee has described prisons as a “failed institution that breed criminality, fail to rehabilitate and suck up vast amounts of public funding.” The Committee handed down a majority report calling for the country to adopt a justice reinvestment policy, which has been introduced in 27 states across the US and has redirected billions in prisons expenditure to restorative programmes.

The [Netherlands'](#) justice minister has proposed putting a personal computer in every prison cell in the country. The computers would have no email and little or no internet access. The main reason for installing them would be to reduce the amount of time worked by prison staff. The prisoners would use the computers to fill in their food, visiting and exercise schedules. Prisoners eligible for release may also be allowed to use the computers for approved study programmes.

The [Russian](#) Federal Penitentiary Service has drafted proposals allowing teenage prisoners to stay in juvenile correctional facilities if their behaviour improves. Under the current law teenagers are transferred to adult penal colonies when they reach the age of 19, but if the amendment is accepted the cut off point will be extended to 25. The aim is to give them the incentive to reform, as well as preventing them from interacting with hardened criminals.

The president of the [Philippines](#) has signed a law to modernise the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor). The law aims to upgrade prison facilities, professionalise and restructure the BuCor and increase the salary and benefits of its personnel.

The [Jamaican](#) government has announced it has received interest from at least two companies to enter into a public/private partnership to build a modern adult correctional facility. The Minister of National Security explained that most of the existing correctional

facilities were never designed with rehabilitation in mind and are in major need of upgrading.

The [US](#) state of Kentucky announced it would not renew a contract with the private Marion Adjustment Center when it expired at the end of June, meaning for the first time in nearly 30 years the state will house none of its prisoners in privately run prisons. The state secretary for justice and public safety said the move would save around \$2 million a year, and credited a 2011 law and other steps taken that reformed sentencing and increased drug treatment opportunities which mean the state can now manage the prison population within existing Department of Corrections facilities.

The Ministers of Justice of [Latvia](#) and Estonia have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on further cooperation in judicial matters and in the development of correctional institutions. The MOU will give Latvian Justice Ministry experts and staff the opportunity to cooperate with Estonian experts who have already implemented infrastructure improvements, and to learn from their experience. According to the Latvian minister the MOU will allow the country to use the Estonian experience to construct a new prison at lower cost.

A high security prison is being built in [Mauritius](#), the first in the country. The new prison will contain state of the art technology including a security management system and fibre optics, 652 CCTV cameras and a cell phone jamming system. A new open prison for women is also being built, along with a new prison to house some 60 pirates under an agreement between the country and the European Union.

[Papua New Guinea](#)'s first isolated maximum security prison will be built on the island of Manus as part of the government's efforts to address prison escapes. The island is only accessible by plane. The prison will be the first privately run maximum security facility in the country.

A new prison that will allow low-risk accused people to remain free while they await trial or find accommodation is part of a \$67 million South [Australian](#) State Government pledge to expand the capacity of the state's prisons. The facility will be built under the proposed Bail Accommodation Support Programme and will house only those charged with non-violent crimes who have been refused bail because they do not have suitable accommodation.

A new prison being built in [Australia](#)'s Northern Territory will have no barbed wire fences but will have a toilet which stops working after seven and a half full flushes a day, and showers which are on a timer. Prisoners will wear colour-coded clothing depending on their security risk and alarms will go off if a prisoner dawdles while walking from one section to another.

[Russia](#)'s Justice Ministry has submitted new legislation to the State Duma to regulate the creation of prison supervisory boards. According to reports, the bill would provide for boards to be established "to help the prison administration to improve prison facilities and equipment" as well as to "resolve inmate's social security issues, arrange their employment and housing upon release, and to organise their education and reform in prison."

A legal article granting human rights groups access to [Bahrain](#)'s prisons has been abandoned following disagreements at the Shura Council, which was divided over who should sanction such visits. The National Institution of Human Rights had been put forward as the body to oversee prison visits, but that responsibility will now stay with the Ministry of the Interior.

In the [US](#) a study of what is described as the first comprehensive survey of crime victims in California has found that the majority said the state sends too many people to prison. Three quarters of crime victims surveyed believed prison doesn't rehabilitate prisoners and might make them worse, and three quarters were in favour of increasing investment in mental health and drug treatment rather than imprisonment.

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