



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

31st Edition – January – February 2016

Welcome to the thirty first edition of the International Prison 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 January to 29 February 2016. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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Prison populations

More than 10.35 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world according to the latest edition of the [World Prison Population List](#) (WPPL), researched and compiled by Roy Walmsley and published by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research. Including the numbers reported to be held in detention centres in China and in prison camps in North Korea, the total may well be in excess of 11 million. The WPPL provides up-to-date information on the global prison population and the rate per 100,000 of the national population in 223 countries and territories. Figures are unavailable for only three countries – Eritrea, North Korea and Somalia. The report includes information about trends in prison population levels and about the difference between male and female prison population levels.

Up to 130 more prison cells in [New Zealand](#) could be "double-bunked" to cope with an unexpected increase in the prison population, the Chief Executive of the Corrections Department told a select committee. The prison muster rose to 9,360 in January, contrary to long-term forecasts of a fall in prisoners, and is expected to rise further. The Department said the core drivers behind the increase were alcohol and drug dependency and gang membership, which kept people in a cycle of crime or prevented rehabilitation. Although the long-term prison population was relatively stable, the remand population had grown significantly.

In the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) the justice minister announced that around 2,000 prisoners would be released in January in a bid to reduce overcrowding in jails and calm political tensions at the start of an election year. A 2013 study by the UN mission in the country found the occupancy rate in the capital Kinshasa's main prison at more than 400 percent of capacity and documented multiple prison deaths from suffocation. The minister said about 1,200 low-level offenders who had served at least one-quarter of their sentences and received approval from the prison director and prosecutor-general would be freed, along with a further 800 prisoners who are to be released following pardons granted by the President to all prisoners aged 70 and older who have not committed serious crimes.

[Nicaragua](#) has released more than 8,000 prisoners on parole and sent 94 foreigners to finish sentences in their home countries since 2014, easing overcrowding in prisons, the government announced. All the 8,149 Nicaraguans given conditional release had been sentenced to five years or less, the government said in a statement. The releases were approved by the justice ministry, national prosecutors and the police, and were part of "a humanitarian and reconciliation policy."

The [US](#) Justice Department should limit the types of cases it brings, and more nonviolent criminals should be steered toward probation and away from prison, according to task force recommendations designed to cut the federal prisoner count and save more than \$5 billion in the coming years. The suggestions were released amid a national dialogue across the federal government about overhauling the country's criminal justice system, which critics say is overly expensive and has resulted in unduly long sentences for nonviolent drug criminals. A bipartisan effort to reduce the prison population appears stalled for the moment in Congress, although the White House and Justice Department have encouraged changes in how suspects are prosecuted and sentenced at the federal level. The recommendations from the Charles Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections provide concrete steps that prosecutors, judges, prison officials and policymakers can take to reduce prison overcrowding and ease spending on a corrections system that has swelled in the past three decades as a result of harsh mandatory minimum sentences imposed on thousands of drug criminals. Taken together, the proposals call for prison to be used sparingly as a punishment and for prosecutors and judges to avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

For the first time, more than a quarter of prisoners in [Canadian](#) federal prisons are aboriginal people. "The most current figure we have is quite shocking," said Correctional Investigator of Canada Howard Sapers, the country's prison ombudsman. "In federal corrections, 25.4 per cent of the incarcerated population are now of aboriginal ancestry." Of 14,624 federal prisoners across the country, 3,723 are aboriginal people. In the Prairie provinces, 48 per cent of federal prisoners are aboriginal people. For aboriginal women, the proportions are even higher. According to the most recent statistics, more than 36 per cent of women in prison are of aboriginal descent.

An increasing number of foreigners were imprisoned last year in [Hong Kong](#), with many of them coming from Southeast Asia. The Correctional Services Department said it had received 1,525 non-Chinese national prisoners from 65 countries by the end of last year, marking a 20 per cent jump from 2014. To address the high influx of non-Chinese or English speaking prisoners, the department had arranged for 260 staff to learn Vietnamese, Urdu,

Indonesian and Punjabi. "To further overcome language barriers, we distributed tablets with translation software to our staff last December to facilitate communication with the prisoners," the Correctional Services Commissioner said.

Treatment of prisoners

UN experts expressed alarm at disturbing and cramped conditions in [Benin's](#) detention facilities, including poor access to water and food, and urged the west African country to immediately reduce overcrowding. The United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT) said Benin had made some progress since its previous visit in 2008, but warned conditions remained dire. "Most of the detention centres we visited were overcrowded and lacked adequate staffing and other resources," Victor Madrigal Borloz, who headed the five-member SPT delegation, said in a statement. "In our discussions with the government of Benin, we made it clear that to avoid extreme suffering, it is both essential and urgent to improve detainees' access to water and food, deal with unhygienic conditions and reduce overcrowding," he said. The committee meanwhile noted that changes to Benin's penal code, including a new requirement that anyone arrested must be presented to a judicial authority within 48 hours, had led to some improvements.

Some 30 Islamists launched a hunger strike at [Mauritania's](#) main jail, saying they were being punished after a New Year's Eve escape by a high-profile prisoner facing death over an Al-Qaeda assassination plot. The prisoners said in a statement that they had started the protest at the main prison in Nouakchott, the capital, and would continue until all their demands had been met. These included "visits by family members and for a doctor to be present on the premises round the clock for faster access to prescribed medicines," the statement said. The prisoners alleged they were facing "punitive measures after the escape of an Islamist prisoner we had no connection with."

A total of 46 prisoners escaped from a public prison in the northern [Brazilian](#) city of Natal early on 12 January, in the largest single prison break in the history of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The prisoners escaped through a tunnel dug into the ground, which directors of the prison said measured 131ft long. The prison has capacity for 216 prisoners, but was holding 430, with just 12 staff. At least three prison breaks were recorded at the unit in 2015. A civil court judge specialising in penitentiary matters, Henrique Baltazar, said that such overcrowding could lead to an incident on an even greater scale. "Soon we are going to see a record prison break, because the situation is getting worse," he said. "The prisons are overstretched, the authorities do not have control, and the state shows no interest in building more [prisons]" he added.

The [Latvian](#) Ministry of Foreign Affairs has released information on the country's achievements in the field of human rights in advance of its Universal Periodic Review by the UN Human Rights Council. One of the main areas where Latvia has demonstrated significant progress is the improvement of conditions of detention for prisoners. Following up on the results of a comprehensive audit in places of detention conducted in 2013 and 2014, Latvia has ensured the accommodation of prisoners in compliance with international standards, namely, that the cell space be not less than 4 square metres per prisoner. This space allocation per prisoner has been assured in specific legislation. Noteworthy progress has

also been achieved with respect to reducing the overall prison population: the number of people imprisoned has been reduced by approximately 30 per cent in the past four years. This has been accomplished by offering more alternatives to deprivation of liberty as well as by raising the proportion of fines and of community service. This entailed conceptual changes in the system of criminal punishment were instituted as well as amendments made to the Criminal Law and other legislation.

A recent report by [Chile](#)'s judiciary has deplored the dangerous and inhumane conditions of prisons in Chile, highlighting concern over overcrowding, a problem that plagues prisons across Latin America. The report -- the result of a commission created by the Santiago Court of Appeals -- involved visits to 13 prisons in Chile. It describes poor conditions for prison staff, lack of adequate medical and nutritional services, and structural issues such as "irregular electrical installations" that pose a threat to prisoners in some prisons. In some instances, the report noted that prisoners wait as much as 17 hours between meals or are forced to eat frozen or semi-frozen food. The report also notes that overcrowding continues to be a problem in some prisons, having found cases in which as many as 14 prisoners live in a space no larger than eight square meters.

In [India](#) a new Model Prison Manual has been approved by the Union Home Minister. Revisions in the manual aim at bringing "basic uniformity in laws, rules and regulations governing the administration of prisons and the management of prisoners all over the country". They call for access to free legal services to prisoners from poor and weaker sections of society, the appointment of advocates to visit jails, the setting up of a legal aid clinic in every prison, legal literacy classes in prisons, the constitution of pre-trial prisoner review committees and provisions to ensure legal services for pre-trial prisoners who have undergone half of the maximum sentence for that offence. Among additional provisions for women prisoners are comprehensive health screening, including tests to determine the presence of sexually transmitted or blood-borne diseases, mental health concerns, or drug dependence. The revisions also call for jail staff to be sensitive to and trained on gender issues and sexual violence; education of women on preventive healthcare measures; proper counselling and treatment for those suffering from psychological disorders; and focussed aftercare and rehabilitation measures to ease the reintegration of women prisoners into society.

[Samoa](#) has established an ex-convicts' society with the full support of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Police and Prisons. More than 15 former prisoners aged 40 to 75 have offered to help the Prisons Authority stop prisoners escaping, as well as to handle human rights complaints from prisoners. A founding member of the Gauigana'a society and former prisoner, Tofilau Faamanu Ivara, says between 60 and 70 percent of the prisoners currently in jail are re-offenders. Tofilau says many of the prisoners' families reject them and they re-offend because they are attracted back to prison, which provides accommodation and food.

Prison can be a particularly dangerous place for gay, bisexual and transgender prisoners (LGBT) but the [Irish](#) Prison Service does not have particular policies to deal with their concerns, the authors of a study on the topic have said. LGBT prisoners interviewed for a study commissioned by the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) told researchers of their experience of harassment and bullying and the way they felt it made their lives in prison

easier if they hid their sexual identity. The authors of the report, *Out on the Inside*, recommended that the Irish Prison Service explicitly consider and address the needs of LGBT prisoners as part of overall prisoner management, response and welfare.

UN investigators have accused [Syria](#) of "extermination" in its jails and detention centres, saying prisoners were executed, tortured to death or held in such horrific conditions that they perished. Over the past four and a half years, thousands of detainees have been killed while being held by different sides in Syria's brutal conflict, the UN commission of inquiry on Syria said in its latest report. The report painted a stark picture of prisons and detention centres run by the Syrian authorities. "It is apparent that the government authorities administering prisons and detention centres were aware that deaths on a massive scale were occurring," the report said. It accused Damascus of committing "extermination as a crime against humanity."

Prison violence

In [Mexico](#) 49 prisoners died in a fight between two rival factions of the Zetas drug cartel battling for control of the Topo Chico prison in the northern industrial city of Monterrey, highlighting the lack of authority and overcrowding plaguing many Mexican prisons. Twelve others were injured during the "pitched battle" that lasted 30 to 40 minutes, according to the Nuevo Leon state governor. "They used sharp weapons, bats, sticks," the governor told Radio Imagen, adding that the 60-year-old penitentiary houses 3,800 prisoners, overseen by 100 guards. One of the prisoners was shot dead by a prison guard who was protecting a group of women, Rodriguez said. During the violence prisoners set a fire in a supply room and TV images showed flames coming out of the prison in the middle of the night.

A fight at an overcrowded [Guatemalan](#) prison killed at least eight prisoners and wounded 20. An altercation between two prisoners turned into a battle between rival gangs at the prison in Puerto Barrios, about 185 miles (300 km) northeast of the capital, according to the interior minister who said there were nearly 1,000 prisoners in the prison that was designed to hold 400. The incident was the latest in a string of deadly prison fights in the Central American country in recent years. In November, 16 prisoners were killed in a prison riot, with three of the victims decapitated.

One prisoner was killed and 20 others wounded in a grenade attack at a prison in Maracay, [Venezuela](#), the Attorney General's Office said. Two grenades were launched at the prison as the prisoners were preparing to leave the yard and return to their cells. One of the grenades landed in the yard and the explosion "instantly killed one of the (prisoners), while another 20 were wounded, three of them with serious injuries," said the AG's Office in a statement. The second grenade landed on the roof of the prison without causing casualties. Maracay media outlets said that the dead prisoner headed a group of prisoners that was at odds with another group seeking to control various activities in the facility.

A guard was beaten and briefly held captive by prisoners at [New Caledonia](#)'s East Camp prison. The police say about twenty detainees in Noumea's overcrowded facility burnt furniture and mattresses during the night. At about 11 o'clock a patrolling guard was assaulted by several prisoners who had managed to open the doors of their cells. A police

spokesperson says he was kicked and punched especially about the head and kept in a cell for about half an hour before being freed by other guards. Firefighters and police intervened to stop the riot which lasted three hours.

In [South Africa](#) three prisoners were stabbed to death and nearly 30 were injured in fighting in the awaiting-trial section of Durban's Westville Prison. This followed a clampdown in the prison after the province's prison head, Mnikelwa Nxele, was suspended. Sources said Westville Prison had been in turmoil since the suspension, with wardens loyal to Nxele allegedly refusing to cooperate with their superiors. Following the clampdown, violence escalated and prison gangs went on the rampage because of the closing down of communication and contraband channels between the section, which houses thousands of awaiting-trial prisoners who travel to court for hearings, and the outside world. "Three prisoners were killed in the fighting between the 26s and the 28s [gangs]," said a source within the prison. "Another 29 prisoners and three wardens were also stabbed in separate attacks. Things are bad here. There were even prisoners stabbed in the hospital. We counted a total of seven ambulances that attended the scene and removed the injured to hospitals nearby."

Prisoners in Victoria, [Australia](#) who violently attack prison guards and police custody officers will serve an extra five years in jail, under tough new state laws. The move to protect guards comes after increasingly violent assaults behind bars. In October four officers were hospitalised after two prisoners launched an unprovoked attack in the Barwon prison exercise yard. The new legislation also follows Victoria's worst prison riot in July last year, which saw 400 prisoners riot at the Metropolitan Remand Centre in Ravenhall.

In [Papua New Guinea](#) eleven prisoners were shot dead and 17 others wounded and recaptured in a swift and severe response by police and correctional service officers in Lae City after a mass prison breakout. More than 30 prisoners attacked and wounded two prison officers on duty and escaped from the prison compound. In [Ivory Coast](#) nine prisoners and one guard were killed at the main jail in a failed escape attempt by prisoners who had obtained firearms, according to the prosecutor general. The breakout bid at the MACA prison in Abidjan, the main commercial city, began when prisoners opened fire on guards.

The [Irish](#) Prison Service has said improvements in conditions for prisoners have led to a significant reduction in the level of violence in prisons. Over €28m has been spent refurbishing Mountjoy Prison, which the governor says – along with the ending of the practice of slopping-out – has reduced violent incidents there by as much as 40%. New sports and leisure facilities are also being built at Mountjoy, including a new state-of-the-art gym and an all-weather soccer pitch, which the authorities said will further reduce levels of tension and aggression in the jail. The prison service said the improvements in facilities and the increased access to education and training programmes have contributed to the significant reduction in violence in prisons.

Developments in rehabilitation

The [Thai](#) Justice Ministry has submitted a proposal for funding to build 17 low-cost, minimum security prisons to house and retrain prisoners nearing release at the end of their sentences. The proposal is to build 17 knockdown prisons by using remodelled shipping containers as accommodation. Each prison would comprise cells and an office. It would be built immediately outside the prison wall, but still in the same compound where the prison is located. Prisoners would also receive occupational training and coaching to prepare them for a return to society. The planned facilities are intended for prisoners who have only six months to one year remaining of their sentence and have a good conduct record.

A new ten-year plan for the [Czech](#) prison service, presented by the Justice Ministry, aims to improve the system of prisoners' education and training to increase their chance of finding jobs after release from prison. According to Prison Service statistics, some 44 percent of prisoners have only elementary education, 2 percent did not even complete primary school, 38 percent finished apprentice training school and only 7 percent are secondary school graduates. Their training in prison will primarily focus on technical fields and crafts that are in demand in the labour market. Prisoners could also attend computer and language courses.

Prisoners in [Costa Rica](#) are changing their lives for the better as the country's Ministry of Justice and Peace has introduced a course in computer programming taught by experts from the Microsoft Corporation. The initial batch of prisoners to participate in the new program includes 15 prisoners from the Heredia detainment facility called the Centro de Atención Institucional Gerardo Rodríguez. The trainees, aged between 22 and 53 years old, were chosen because of their good behavior while inside the penitentiary. According to Costa Rican Times, the trainees have already reached the 8th or 9th level of education that is being offered inside the prison and will be undergoing training in web development and programming in Javascript, HTML-5, and CSS. After they finish the program, they will be given a certificate in "Programming in HTML5 with JavaScript and CSS3," which they can use to look for related jobs once they get out of prison.

In [Australia](#), prisoners at the ACT's jail will be put to work under an ambitious new \$9 million bakery and laundromat program, designed to quell restlessness, aid rehabilitation, and service the fast-growing prisoner population. Prison employment is considered a central plank to rehabilitation efforts for prisoners, teaching transferable skills, preventing boredom, structuring days, and fostering a sense of teamwork and fulfilment. It is also said to aid prison security, largely by preventing restlessness.

The number of prisoners securing jobs before their release from prison in [Singapore](#) increased last year, thanks in part to the increase in the number of employers registered with the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE). A total of 2,042 prisoners managed to get jobs in 2015, up from 1,865 in 2014. Over the same two years, the number of employers registered with SCORE went up by 7 per cent — from 4,433 to 4,745. Finding stable employment is important, because it lowers the risk for ex-offenders to lapse again into criminal activities. Mr Rockey Francisco Jr, director of the Singapore Prison Service's Community Corrections Command unit, said: "I think community support is

essential. Re-integration work and rehabilitation work doesn't just stop at the end of their sentence. It continues into the community."

In [Italy](#), the seventh most popular theatre in Rome is inside a prison. "We have 350 seats and around 10,000 annual spectators coming from the outside," Fabio Cavalli, theatre director at Rebibbia Prison, told a news agency. He added: "During the last 14 years we have been working with more than 500 convicts. All of them have different backgrounds and are in prison with a sentence of at least three years. They have committed crimes from robbery to homicide, or belonged to criminal and mafia organizations." Statistics from Rebibbia Prison have shown that the recidivism rate among those involved in theatre activities is significantly lower than that of others. More than half of Italy's adult prisons have a theatre company. The number of acting companies is increasing and bringing good results year after year to the point that the Italian justice ministry has recognized theatre activities in prison as an element which discourages recidivism and helps reintegration in society.

In [New Zealand](#), prisoners at Auckland Women's Corrections Facility in Wiri have donated 72kg of fresh vegetables which have been distributed to six South Auckland foodbanks. It is the first crop the prisoners have harvested from their new garden, which is named Te Huarahi Oranga, or 'the pathway to wellbeing'. The new garden is about the size of a rugby field and includes New Zealand native plants and ornamentals as well as vegetables. A local company donated the seeds for the garden and about 20 prisoners will use it this year to gain NCEA levels 1 and 2 in horticulture. Six prisoners will also take part in a pilot scheme to learn apiculture or beekeeping. Horticulture instructor Marian Jones says the programme aims to help prisoners gain skills that will lead to jobs on their release.

A [Mexican](#) man has turned prisoners' creativity into a profitable business. Jorge Cueto sells leather bags with tattoo patterns that are crafted inside one of the biggest prisons in Mexico, an enterprise that has changed the lives of more than 200 people. Cueto was himself incarcerated at Puente Grande prison in 2012 and soon realized there were few opportunities for prisoners to work, and the opportunities that did exist were poorly paid. He organized a small-scale project with some of the tattooists who live inside that prison, as well as artisans who work with leather. These men created bags and wallets, which they sold both inside and outside the prison. After serving his nine-month sentence, Cueto created the "Prison Art Project" and developed his registered brand, "Prison Art." He now sells his line in stores across Mexico, employing 219 prisoners that he says he pays in keeping with the standards of "Fair Trade." One of the rules to join the project is that part of the money earned must be sent to the prisoner's family. Participants also have to attend support meetings for alcohol and drug abuse, if needed.

Sentencing and the law

[Cambodia](#)'s first juvenile justice law, in the works for nearly a decade, will be passed by the end of 2016, according to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The law comes after long-standing campaigns by civil society and international donors for Cambodia to afford basic internationally accepted rights to the hundreds of juveniles who face possible abuse, injustice and developmental harm as they pass through legal system designed strictly for adults. Although the age of criminal responsibility in Cambodia is 14, the Kingdom's Penal

Code has no separate laws to address juvenile offenders, leaving children facing the same legal prescriptions as adults and imprisoned alongside criminals of all ages.

The [Jamaican](#) parliament has debated a bill to implement restorative justice nationwide, building on the success of a pilot program implemented in several communities across the island. The measure calls for making restorative justice an available option in the formal justice system, allowing some cases to be resolved outside the courtroom, Justice Minister Mark Golding said in a statement. "It also means that the communities and the people involved will benefit from a sustainable form of justice that will really heal the wrong, focus on the victim's needs and allow them to move on with their lives," the minister said. Restorative justice seeks to rehabilitate offenders through positive engagement with victims and reintegration within the community.

Legislation recently submitted to the [Cypriot](#) parliament will see drug addict offenders given a second chance by requesting to undergo drug rehabilitation instead of being sent to prison. Under the new legislation, a cabinet-appointed committee will advise courts on when an offender should be spared time behind bars and undergo treatment instead. The committee will be headed by a representative of Legal Services and will also be made up of a psychiatrist and clinical psychologist. Offenders will have to request treatment instead of prison but the legislation has made it clear that the option will not be offered to offenders charged with possession with attention to supply to others (trafficking). Those who are selected will have to report to a centre within 48 hours and sign a contract of agreement to comply with the programme on offer. The minimum treatment period has been set at three months which the court will be able to extend for up to two years. Centres must report back on the offender's progress at three month intervals. If the offenders violate their contract, they will be sent back to court for their original prison sentence to be passed and also face an additional penalty of up to a year in prison or a €1,000 fine, or both.

[Norway](#)'s courts will now be able to sentence drug-addicted convicts to treatment programmes instead of sending them to jail. Following successful trials in Bergen and Oslo, the narkotikaprogrammet (narcotics programme) is being introduced nationwide, effective immediately. Announcing the expansion of the programme, Justice Minister Anders Andundsen said: "We're rolling out a program that has been tested since 2006, in which addicts have been sentenced to treatment with concrete follow-up. The goal is that more addicts will rid themselves of their drug dependency and fewer will return to crime. But if the terms of the programme are violated, the convicts must serve an ordinary prison term."

The [US](#) saw a record number of exonerations in 2015, with nearly 40 percent of the cases involving individuals who were exonerated in homicides, a new report shows. The National Registry of Exonerations said in its report that 149 people falsely convicted of crimes were exonerated last year. That's 10 more than in 2014, the year with the previous highest total since the group began keeping records in 1989. The registry is a project of the University of Michigan Law School and has documented more than 1,730 such cases in the US. Since 2011, the annual number of exonerations has more than doubled and there are now an average of nearly three exonerations a week, said Samuel Gross, a University of Michigan law professor and registry editor.

Prison policy

[US](#) President Barack Obama has announced a ban on solitary confinement in federal prisons for juveniles and as a punishment for low-level infractions. “The United States is a nation of second chances,” he said, “but the experience of solitary confinement too often undercuts that second chance.” The President also called for an expansion in treatment for mentally ill prisoners and an extension of the time prisoners in solitary can spend outside their cells, currently limited to about an hour a day. These reforms are expected to affect some 10,000 federal prisoners, about a 10th of the total number of U.S. prisoners held in solitary. They are part of more than 50 “guiding principles” recommended for all correctional facilities by the Department of Justice in a review of restrictive housing.

Approximately 11,000 prisoners across [Belgium](#) will soon be able to make calls, watch digital TV, rent movies and play video games from their cells, the FPS Justice announced. All prisons will eventually be connected to a secure digital platform known as the Prison Cloud. The technology will also allow prisoners the opportunity to take online courses and check their judicial records.

[Romania](#)’s government has suspended a controversial law that made prisoners eligible for a reduced sentence if they had written a book. The rule drew criticism after anti-corruption prosecutors investigating suspicions of abuse said one 212-page book was apparently written in seven hours, leading to suspicions that works were plagiarised or ghostwritten. A government spokesman said the government had suspended the legislation until 1 September. The justice minister had called for it to be scrapped but was overruled by the council of magistrates. Under the law prisoners can have their sentences reduced by 30 days for every “scientific work” they publish, subject to a judge’s decision on whether the book merits it. The justice ministry says 340 books were published by prisoners last year, up from 90 in 2014.

Under a new rule, detainees in [Russian](#) pre-trial detention centres will be banned from addressing either one another or their guards in the traditional, foul-mouthed slang of the Russian prison system, known as “fenya.” The ban, reported by the Interfax news agency, prohibits prisoners from “socializing with other individuals using lewd, threatening, demeaning or slanderous expressions or slang.” There was no immediate indication of how the authorities intended to enforce the rule. Russian prisoners generally live in large, barracks-style communal cells with as many as 80 prisoners to a room. They are typically left alone at night, locked in and largely left to enforce their own rules of behaviour. While banning swearing, the new regulation relaxed some other rules for prisoners in pre-trial detention. Detainees, who sometimes await trial for years, are now allowed to possess a larger range of personal items, including shower gel, deodorant and electric kettles, but not cellphones or cameras.

Muslim imams working in [Canadian](#) federal prisons say if prisoners are being radicalised behind bars, it's in part because chaplains aren't being given enough time to build relationships with prisoners already radicalized or at risk. Two Muslim chaplains spoke to CBC's French-language service, Radio-Canada, on the condition of anonymity

because they are not authorized to speak with the media. They said radicalised prisoners can step in to fill a spiritual void for other prisoners because chaplains rarely have one-on-one meetings with prisoners, and those meetings usually last less than 10 minutes. The chaplains also say they spend too much time traveling between different federal prisons and not enough time with vulnerable prisoners.

The [Mexican](#) Interior Secretariat has requested 6.7 billion pesos (US \$368 million) from the Finance Secretariat to implement infrastructure and maintenance projects in Mexico's four maximum security penitentiaries. The money will be spent on building new facilities for the four jails, extending their service life by up to 20 years. Another matter of concern for officials at the Interior Secretariat is governability within the jail, for which the administrative areas will be strengthened. "The professionalization of the warden and security staff will be improved, and the staff shall . . . receive quality and specialized training, based on international performance standards" according to a spokesman.

In [Switzerland](#), Canton Vaud has introduced a new prison policy to better identify dangerous prisoners following two deaths in 2010 and 2013. The revamped procedures are meant to improve cooperation between prison guards and psychiatrists who evaluate offenders. The new policy was prompted by the death of a prisoner in 2010 and the killing of a 19-year-old woman by a former prisoner three years later. The second death occurred after a psychopathic prisoner was released on house arrest two-thirds of the way through serving a custodial sentence for killing another woman. Cantons Aargau and Zurich have previously overhauled their release policies following murders by former prison prisoners. Psychiatrists in Vaud are now obliged to inform prison staff as soon as warning signs about prisoners become apparent. The re-think also highlights the issue of overcrowding in many Swiss prisons. In canton Vaud, there are on average 1,000 prisoners behind bars against a capacity of 799 in the canton. Individual jails are overcrowded at between 150% and 170% of capacity.

Jail guards of the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in the [Philippines](#) went on a hunger strike to call for the modernisation of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor). President Benigno Aquino 3rd had approved Republic Act 10575 (The Bureau of Corrections Act of 2013) that "mainly seeks to upgrade prison facilities, professionalize and restructure the bureau and increase the salary and benefits of its personnel." The prison guards, however, pointed out that the law has not yet been fully implemented three years after the President signed it.

Frustrated attempts by the authorities in [El Salvador](#) to stem cash flows in prisons point to the strength of prison economies in the country, and mirror concerns regarding government control of prisons across the region. On December 18, 2015, Salvadoran authorities tweeted that a new cashless system had been successfully implemented in all of the country's prisons. The "Cero Dinero" (Zero Cash) system assigns each prisoner a debit account in which family members can deposit money. Prisoners can only have \$100 in their accounts at a time, and careful record is taken of who deposits money. However, the new system has not been able to stop the flow of money and illicit goods in prisons. In a late January 2016 prison raid, authorities seized \$11,000 in cash, along with more than 300 cell phones and 700 sim cards.

[Norwegian](#) prisoners are increasingly willing to be voluntarily transferred to Dutch prison Norgehaven in Veenhuizen, which Norway has been renting since September. Prisoners initially had to be forced to transfer, now there is something of a “small waiting list”, Norwegian director of the Dutch prison Karl Hillesland said to RTV Drenthe. In the Netherlands, prisoners are let out more often than in Norway and they have to work less. And as the Netherlands is so far away from Norway, the prisoners in the Dutch prison have more time to call family members and a special Skype-calling room has been set up.

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