



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

49th Edition – January – February 2019

Welcome to the 49th edition of the International Prison News Digest, our selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. The Digest is produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 January to 28 February 2019.

We aim in the Digest to cover all regions of the world and include new developments in policy and practice, as well as information from official and intergovernmental bodies. News items are grouped regionally. By clicking on the hyperlinks, you can access the news articles in their original form.

Content is sourced solely from English language news stories. Readers wishing to notify us of important news items in other languages are welcome to send us articles with a short summary of key content and we will consider them for inclusion in the next edition. Please note that ICPR is not responsible for the accuracy of external content.

Information on global prison systems can be found on [World Prison Brief](#)

AFRICA

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Thirteen people were killed in a jailbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo's central Kasai region. [Daily Nation, 10 February 2019](#)

Ghana: Every prison in Ghana is due to have its own fish farm as part of a governmental initiative. [The Fish Site, 5 February 2019](#)

Libya: A UN official has spoken of the 'travesty' of thousands of men, women, and children being locked up in Libya's jails, facing torture and abuse, without getting their day in court. [TRT World, 23 January 2019](#)

Malawi: Malawi has removed nearly 270 minors from two adult prisons following a court ruling and warnings about food shortages, disease risk and overcrowding. [News 24, 14 February 2019](#)

Rwanda: The Government has embarked on a long term plan to decongest its correctional facilities by focusing more on rehabilitation. [The New Times, 24 February 2019](#)

Zimbabwe: The prison service has failed to bring prisoners to court for trial and bail applications due to the country's fuel crisis. [New Zimbabwe, 10 January 2019](#)

AMERICAS

Bahamas: The Correctional Officers Staff Association has called on the Department of Correctional Services officials to rethink a policy which subjects all prison officers to a daily strip search. [Eyewitness News, 7 January 2019](#)

Brazil: Human Rights Watch has criticised new Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro over his proposals on prisons and security. [NZ Herald, 18 January 2019](#)

Brazil: Police and soldiers are being deployed in large numbers to Brazil's north-east to fight a wave of gang violence fuelled by the overloaded, collapsing prison system. [The Straits Times, 21 January 2019](#)

Canada: A judge has ruled that a former prisoner held in solitary confinement for more than one year suffered a cruel and unusual punishment for which he should receive a reduced sentence. [Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 6 January 2019](#)

Canada: Canadian prisons are testing visitors for illicit drugs using potentially unreliable technology, according to a researcher at Wilfrid Laurier University. [CBC, 7 January 2019](#)

Canada: British Columbia's top court has given the federal government five extra months to overhaul laws governing solitary confinement. [The Globe and Mail, 7 January 2019](#)

Canada: Canada's prison ombudsman says some older, long-serving prisoners are being "warehoused" in prisons not equipped to handle end-of-life care. [News 1130, 28 February 2019](#)

Cayman Islands: The Human Rights Commission has detailed the human rights challenges in the prison system, describing it as "overcrowded, chronically underfunded and in need of urgent investment". [Cayman News Service, 18 February 2019](#)

United States: Lawmakers and prison reform advocates are pushing three bills in the General Assembly that would require the Virginia Department of Corrections to track and share records of prisoners in solitary confinement. [Centre View, 16 January 2019](#)

ASIA

Bangladesh: The Home Minister has told Parliament that the government will make arrangements for all prisoners to be able to talk to their relatives by telephone. [UNB, 6 February 2019](#)

Cambodia: A working group established to streamline court procedures, with the aim of resolving prison overcrowding, has begun sending cases to municipal and provincial courts throughout the country. [The Phnom Penh Post, 7 February 2019](#)

Hong Kong: Hong Kong plans to introduce a smart prison system to enhance the efficiency of custodial operations and the security of correctional institution through the application of innovation and technology. [Xinhua, 14 February 2019](#)

India: India is set to have more open prisons as national policy is “almost finalised” that will pave way for opening more such prisons across the country. [New Indian Express, 20 January 2019](#)

Iran: Iran will free 50,000 prisoners on the occasion of the Islamic Revolution 40th anniversary, the head of the country's Supreme Judiciary Council has announced. [i24 News, 4 February 2019](#)

Singapore: Changi Prison Complex is adapting facial recognition technology through a project that will help its officers analyse and respond to prisoners’ behaviours more effectively. [The Independent, 25 February 2019](#)

Sri Lanka: A total of 1,299 death row prisoners, including prisoners who had appealed against their sentence, were detained in Sri Lankan prisons as of December 31 last year. [Daily Mirror, 10 January 2019](#)

Taiwan: The relatives of prisoners at some prisons in Taiwan will be able to make virtual visits soon, as the government is about to roll out the system on a trial basis. [Focus Taiwan, 30 January 2019](#)

EUROPE

Finland: Finland’s Justice Ministry is examining the possibility of life in prison without parole following Minister Antti Häkkinen's calls for stronger sentencing. [YLE, 26 January 2019](#)

Germany: The proportion of foreign-born prisoners in German prisons is now at a record high, according to a new survey of the justice ministries in Germany's 16 federal states. [Gatestone Institute, 13 February 2019](#)

Ireland: A prisoner has lost a High Court action claiming his human right to privacy was breached because a makeshift “modesty screen” around the toilet and shower in his cell was removed. [The Irish Times, 22 January 2019](#)

Netherlands: There are major problems at prison hospital JCvSZ in Scheveningen with detainees complaining about poor medical supervision, receiving incorrect medication, black mould on the walls, and a lack of activities. [NL Times, 25 January 2019](#)

Norway: Norway should improve the situation for prisoners in solitary confinement, according to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. [Council of Europe, 17 January 2019](#)

Russia: A top official from the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) says its workers are suffering from "moral fatigue" as a result of low wages and daily contact with prisoners who sometimes attack the guards. [Radio Free Europe, 7 January 2019](#)

Switzerland: The number of prisoners in Switzerland rose 50% from 1988 to 2017. [Le News, 7 February 2019](#)

UNITED KINGDOM

England and Wales: Bars are to be removed from prison windows at new jails because they are too 'punitive and institutional.' [Metro, 9 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: The Prison Service has been urged to stop placing elderly or immobile prisoners in jails with insufficient ground floor cells. [News and Star, 10 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: The Ministry of Justice is considering banning prison sentences of less than six months in England and Wales. [BBC News, 12 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: Painful restraint of children in young offender institutions and secure training centres increases the risk of abuse, a serious case review has said. [BBC News, 21 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: A prisoner was found killing rats in his own cell at a "dirty and vermin-infested prison" during an inspection visit, it has emerged. [Independent, 22 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: The justice secretary has conceded that the state of safety in prisons is "disturbing" as figures revealed a surge in deaths, assaults and self-harm behind bars. [The Guardian, 31 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: More than half of the prisoners held in prisons for young people in England and Wales are from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background, the highest proportion on record. [The Guardian, 29 January 2019](#)

England and Wales: Children in custody are still not safe from sexual abuse after more than 1,000 attacks were alleged from 2009 to 2017, a statutory inquiry has found. [The Guardian, 28 February 2019](#)

Scotland: The majority of Scotland's prisons were at or beyond their maximum capacity in December, figures show. [The Scotsman, 13 January 2019](#)

Scotland: A leading psychiatrist has been appointed to oversee an independent review of the mental health support services available to young people in prison. [Telegraph and Argus, 18 January 2019](#)

Scotland: Prison officers are at "breaking point" with prisoners "taking advantage" of the situation in Scotland's jails, according to correspondence published through Freedom of Information. [The Scotsman, 26 January 2019](#)

Scotland: Short prison sentences of less than 12 months will effectively come to an end this summer. [Herald Scotland, 4 February 2019](#)

Scotland: More than 1,400 prisoners in Scotland have had to share a single cell with another prisoner, according to the justice secretary. [BBC News, 17 February 2019](#)

OCEANIA

Australia: There are renewed calls to raise the minimum age a child can be imprisoned in the wake of another damning report into Western Australia's "broken" youth justice system. [WA Today, 22 January 2019](#)

Australia: The Northern Territory Attorney-General's office has been criticised for allowing mentally ill or disabled people to languish inside already overcrowded prisons for years. [ABC News, 9 February 2019](#)

Australia: A damning review of the conditions at Canberra's adult jail has painted a "bleak picture" of the jail, warning growing overcrowding in the prison could lead to dangerous breaches of the human rights of prisoners and staff. [Canberra Times, 21 February 2019](#)

New Zealand: Staff members at a Northland prison are alleging "inhumane" conditions, with prisoners remaining in their cells despite "sweltering" summer temperatures. [Stuff, 8 February 2019](#)