



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

50th Edition – March - April 2019

Welcome to the 50th 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 March to 30 April 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

Benin: Burundi has released the first 142 prisoners from a promised 3,000 detainees to promote reconciliation, according to the justice minister. [News 24, 30 March 2019](#)

Madagascar: Thousands of people continue to languish in Malagasy prisons without having been found guilty of any crime due to the excessive use of pre-trial detention, according to Amnesty International. [Amnesty International, 25 April 2019](#)

Swaziland/eSwatini: As many as 1,000 prisoners could be released from jail before the end of their sentences because the government cannot afford to keep them locked up. [All Africa, 13 March 2019](#)

AMERICAS

Brazil: A so-called voluntary work program in Rio de Janeiro prisons has highlighted long-term problems within Brazil's crumbling penitentiary system. [InSight Crime, 19 April 2019](#)

Colombia: Two jail directors and 120 workers within Colombia's national prison system are accused of charging prisoners for perks, including better housing. [InSight Crime, 4 March 2019](#)

Mexico: Mexico's state and federal prison systems are understaffed and dirty, but are no longer as dangerous and overcrowded. [Fox News, 11 April 2019](#)

United States: The prison and jail populations have dropped 10 percent over the last decade according to data released by the US Department of Justice. [UPI, 25 April 2019](#)

Venezuela: A new report about prisons in Venezuela shows how women have begun to assume criminal leadership roles within prisons. [InSight Crime, 3 April 2019](#)

ASIA

China: A prison that houses some of China's most high-profile criminals is reportedly installing an artificial intelligence network that will be able to recognise and track every prisoner around the clock and alert guards if anything seems out of place. [The Telegraph, 1 April 2019](#)

India: People held in prison during or awaiting trial account for two out of every three people in prisons in India. [Hindustan Times, 12 April 2019](#)

Iran: An official said 51,000 Iranian prisoners have so far been released under the recent clemency granted on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution's victory. [Eurasia Review, 11 March 2019](#)

Japan: Toilet paper and other necessities sold at Osaka Prison are so expensive that prisoners mostly cannot purchase them. [Kyodo News, 17 April 2019](#)

Myanmar: Myanmar has begun releasing more than 9,000 prisoners from jails after the president announced an amnesty on the first day of the traditional New Year. [EuroNews, 17 April 2019](#)

Myanmar: Myanmar has begun releasing further prisoners after the president announced he would pardon nearly 7,000 people in addition to thousands released earlier this month. [Reuters, 26 April 2019](#)

Philippines: The Commission on Human Rights has called on the Bureau of Corrections to address problems in jail management instead of revoking the privileges of prisoners. [Phil Star, 6 March 2019](#)

EUROPE

Europe: Unacceptable conditions during transfers of prisoners may amount to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)'s Standing Committee has underlined. [Council of Europe, 1 March 2019](#)

Finland: Prisoners in Finland are working to train artificial intelligence algorithms as part of their prison work. [Fortune, 28 March 2019](#)

France: France is the European country with the highest prison suicide rate, as well as being the country with by far the biggest number of people who manage to escape from jail. [The Local.fr, 2 April 2019](#)

Ireland: The State has paid out almost €9m in compensation and legal fees to staff and prisoners due to assaults and "slopping out" practices. [Irish Examiner, 31 March 2019](#)

Ireland: Irish Prison Service figures show that committals to prison for non-payment of court fines have almost disappeared, down from almost 9,900 in 2015 to just 455 in 2018 – a fall of 95%. [Irish Examiner, 2 April 2019](#)

Ireland: A pioneering health programme in Irish prisons has been credited with reducing knife attacks, improving the mental health of prisoners and increasing their uptake of potentially life-saving health screening. [The Irish Times, 29 April 2019](#)

Romania: The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has published its report on its visit to Romania in which it highlighted the abuse of Romanian prisoners by staff, inter-prisoner violence and allegations of police ill-treatment. [EU Today, 20 March 2019](#)

Russia: Around 200 prisoners in 2018 were so badly injured during questioning by investigators in Moscow pre-detention facilities that they required hospitalization. [The Moscow Times, 29 April 2019](#)

Ukraine: The prisoners of Arbuzyńska colony do not have access to fresh water, and instead of toilets, they have to use holes in the ground according to the ombudsman for human rights. [112.ua, 6 March 2019](#)

UNITED KINGDOM

England and Wales: Facial recognition and eye scanning have been deployed at prisons to prevent drug smuggling. [BBC News, 6 March 2019](#)

England and Wales: The government has announced new funding for prisoners to be trained in coding as part of a £1.2m package to help under-represented groups get into work. [Computer Weekly, 15 March 2019](#)

England and Wales: The government's "crisis management" approach to prison funding has been failing for half a decade, according to a parliamentary report which makes renewed calls for an end to short-term jail sentences. [Independent, 3 April 2019](#)

England and Wales: The Ministry of Justice spent £4.2m representing prison officers at inquests, while paying out only £92,000 in legal aid for bereaved families at hearings that examine deaths in prison. [The Guardian, 10 April 2019](#)

England and Wales: The number of times specialist prison officers were deployed to prisons in England and Wales in 2018 increased by nearly 60% since 2014. [BBC News, 16 April 2019](#)

England and Wales: Assaults and incidents of prisoners self-harming are at a record high in prisons in England and Wales, according to Ministry of Justice figures. [The Guardian, 25 April 2019](#)

England and Wales: Prisoners with severe mental health problems are waiting up to six months to be transferred to hospital to get treatment, a Guardian investigation has found. [The Guardian, 21 April 2019](#)

England and Wales: More than 2,500 prison staff have been subject to disciplinary action in the last five years, including for relationships with prisoners, assaulting prisoners and racism. [The Guardian, 29 April 2019](#)

Scotland: Scotland's rising prison population has topped the 8,000 mark, prompting fears it is heading towards the highest levels since the Scottish Parliament was established. [The Scotsman, 3 March 2019](#)

Scotland: Scotland's two privately-run prisons cost the taxpayer a total of £44 million in 2017/18, new figures reveal. [Scottish Legal News, 30 April 2019](#)

OCEANIA

Australia: Two privately operated prisons in Queensland will be transferred into state hands, in a bid to reduce the number of assaults on staff. [ABC News, 26 March 2019](#)

New Zealand: An investigation into illegal internal examinations of female prisoners at an Auckland jail brought back horrific memories for the victims, an independent watchdog says. [Stuff.nz, 26 March 2019](#)

New Zealand: Two years after the publication of a damning report into tie-down beds, the Corrections Department has finally decided to ban their use in the country's prisons. [Stuff.nz, 11 April 2019](#)