



International Centre for Prison Studies

ICPS NEWS DIGEST

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Welcome to the seventh 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 January to 29 February 2012. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

Prison populations

Overcrowding in prisons continues to cause problems around the world. In [Greece](#) the governors of three high security prisons have refused to take any more prisoners, as chronic overcrowding has reached dangerous levels. The governor of Halkida prison said “there is no space anywhere except the bathrooms. We are closing because the prison is close to exploding,” while the governor of Korydallos said the prison was built to hold 800 prisoners but is currently housing more than 2,320.

In the [Philippines](#) President Benigno Aquino has ordered the transfer of prisoners who are about to finish their sentences to military camps to decongest the National Bilibid Prison. The prison can hold 9,000 prisoners but is currently housing more than 20,000, meaning that each cell designed for five people is now holding 12 or 13, and a piece of fish that is supposed to be for one prisoner has to be shared by three.

In [France](#) the president has said 20,000 more prison places need to be built in order for the justice system to be able to carry out sentences.

A report states that [Bolivia](#)’s prison system, already running at almost double capacity, saw a 20 percent rise in numbers of prisoners in 2011, presenting a fertile breeding ground for

criminal gangs. Much of this growth is attributed to the fact that the vast majority, 84 percent of the prison population, has not yet been tried. With funding for prison officers tight, prison facilities are almost entirely run by the prisoners, with prison leaders, known as 'delegates' charging extortion fees to other prisoners for privileges such as family visits and access to a television.

Prisons in [Italy](#) have a capacity of around 45,000 prisoners but are currently holding around 68,000. The overcrowding has resulted in major problems regarding sanitation, healthcare and the rehabilitation of prisoners. Italy has reacted with a raft of new laws including measures to allow prisoners to carry out the last 18 months of their sentence at home. However in real terms this law would only see the release of around 3,500 prisoners.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has voiced concern about the right to security impinging on the right to be free from arbitrary detention in [El Salvador](#), as well as extreme overcrowding in prisons and police facilities in the country. The Working Group also highlighted the lack of written notification of sentences and the lack of effective access to defence counsel.

The rising number of young women in [New Zealand](#) prisons is predicted to keep rising if preventative methods are not taken, says a social anthropologist. The latest figures from the Department of Corrections show the number of female prisoners has jumped almost 30% in the last three years. The rise is being attributed to greater prevalence of violent crime, anti-social behaviour and offending stemming from drug or alcohol abuse.

In [Gibraltar](#) the Prison Board has expressed concern that the number of female prisoners has on occasions exceeded six, this being the maximum number which can be accommodated in cells in the female wing. Meanwhile the daily average prisoner population was over 70 compared to just over 54 during the previous year.

In the [US](#), California has met the first target set by federal courts to reduce its prisoner population as a way to improve healthcare in the country's largest prison system. Federal judges ordered the state to reduce the population by 10,000 by the end of 2011, to about 133,000 prisoners. The population in the 33 prisons for adults fell to 132,887 at the end of December 2011. Also in the [US](#), statistics show that there were 113,000 women in prison in 2010 compared to 1.5 million men. The growth in the female imprisoned population was 2.2 percent since 2000, and male prisoners had an incarceration rate 14 times higher than female prisoners, while black women had an imprisonment rate nearly three times that of white women. A report by Human Rights Watch draws attention to the problems caused by the rising number of older prisoners in the [US](#), such as higher rates of illness and infirmity, and rising medical costs. The latest available figures for 2010 show that eight percent of the prison population was 55 or older compared to three percent in 1995.

A survey of prisons in the [European Union](#) has shown that thousands of people who have not been convicted of any crime are being held for months, or even years, because of the failure of pre-trial rules. The prison population in the EU is estimated at 643,000, with overcrowding a serious issue in more than half of the 27 member countries. The arrival of the European arrest warrant has led to a growing number of people spending long periods

in foreign prisons awaiting trials that may eventually clear them. About 26 percent of EU pre-trial detainees are foreign nationals.

Changes in prison population levels – report by Roy Walmsley, Director of the World Prison Brief

Although the USA continues to hold in custody a much higher percentage of its population than any other country (five times the world average), its rate at the end of 2010 (730 per 100,000) was the third successive annual reduction.

In South America Brazil now has more than 500,000 prisoners, but its rate (261 per 100,000) is exceeded by Uruguay, Guyana and Chile, which is the highest (297).

In the Caribbean a 34% rise last year (from 256 to 344) in the prison population of St Kitts & Nevis, the smallest sovereign state in the Americas, has lifted its prison population rate to 649 – the second highest in the world.

Georgia has now overtaken the Russian Federation as the country with the highest rate in Europe (536 against 529). The Russian rate has been falling for more than three years (it was 630 in mid-2008); this reflects a drop in the actual numbers from 895,000 to 755,000. By contrast the Georgian rate has been rising steadily for eight years (it was 142 at the end of 2003, 220 end-2005, 418 end-2007, 478 end-2009); this reflects a rise in actual numbers from 6,100 to 24,100.

The three Baltic countries continue to have the highest rates in the European Union, but the rates in Estonia and Latvia are falling slowly.

Turkey still has the highest rate (171) among European countries that were not part of the former socialist bloc. England and Wales (155) and Scotland (153) come next, ahead of Spain (152) whose rate has now been falling for more than 18 months. The rates in Italy (112), France (111), Belgium (97), Ireland (95), the Netherlands (87) and Germany (86) are much lower; those in the Nordic countries are all below 80.

For many years Kazakhstan has had the highest rate in Asia, but a continuation in 2011 of the consistent fall in its prison population has taken the rate down to 323, slightly below the level in Indonesia (333) and Thailand (328).

The prison population levels in Australia and New Zealand have stabilised in the last couple of years after what had been a slow upward trend, standing in 2011 at 133 (mid-year) and 195 (annual average) respectively.

Health

An eye infection has broken out in most prisons across [Zambia](#). The Ministry of Health has commenced an eye screening exercise to establish the major cause of the disease and said preliminary results indicate that a lack of proper nutrition is the cause of the infection. Also

in [Zambia](#) the Centre for Infectious Disease Research has opened a TB isolation clinic worth more than K70 million at Lusaka Central Prison. The centre is aimed at addressing the airborne disease which is rife in the prison due to overcrowding. The rate of prison related TB diseases in Zambia is 16 times higher than is found in the community and is one of the highest levels recorded in Sub-Saharan African prisons.

In the [US](#), Arizona's Department of Corrections has agreed to investigate multiple complaints by prisoners about the lack of medical care they are receiving. The wide range of allegations of inadequate or insufficient healthcare includes a diabetic prisoner who went blind in one eye after waiting months for insulin; an epileptic prisoner who wasn't given his medication and suffered repeated seizures for weeks as well as a prisoner with a cancerous growth on his lip who waited for seven months for treatment who then had to have most of his lip and mouth removed leaving him permanently disfigured.

Thirty four prisoners died in [Malawi](#)'s 31 prisons in 2011 due to various illnesses, representing a 26 percent drop on the previous year when 46 prisoners died. A prison service spokesman said the prisoners died of HIV related ailments, TB, malaria, anaemia and pneumonia.

An inadequate budget for prison health in general, and mental health in particular, is one of the many problems that have produced a critical situation for psychiatric care in Luzira Upper Prison in [Uganda](#). Over 300 prisoners have been diagnosed with mental illnesses but the prison's psychiatric drug budget breaks down to less than Shs40 per person per day. The Prisons Act 2006 provides that people with mental illness should be removed from prison to a mental hospital but the lack of any suitable secure mental health facility has prevented this happening in practice.

[Chile](#) has declared a public health alert after an outbreak of hantavirus which began in the El Manzano prison where two prisoners died and ten others have been infected.

A mentally ill prisoner in [Ireland](#) who lost control of his bodily functions was found lying on the floor of a locked room in prison. The Inspector of Prisons said the situation came about because prison staff were not trained to deal with such prisoners. The Inspector said that in his view mentally ill people should not be in prison, but part of the problem was that the Central Mental Hospital, the secure unit for mentally ill people deemed to be a danger to the community, only had around 100 beds.

A report by the Office of the Ombudsman in [New Zealand](#) claims that taxpayers would get better value and prisoners a better level of healthcare if prison health services were delivered by a health agency rather than the Department of Corrections. The report found that prisoners have reasonable access to health services and generally receive healthcare equivalent to the wider community, as required under legislation. However the Office was of the view that prison healthcare was reactive rather than proactive, with a lack of direction and poor lines of communication.

Treatment of prisoners

A massive fire broke out in a prison in [Honduras](#) and killed at least 357 prisoners, including many prisoners trapped in their cells. Reports show that [Honduran](#) prisons are desperately overcrowded, unsanitary and seething with tension and violence, conditions which observers say are likely to have contributed to the high death toll.

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that [Bulgaria](#) violated the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of a prisoner who was found to have been subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment. The prisoner was held in Varna prison and only had access to a toilet three times a day. The rest of the time he had to use a bucket inside the cell which he shared with other prisoners. The Court further established that the jail was infested by rats; the cells were cold and humid and the prisoner could only bathe once every two weeks.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture has said that it had “observed a steady deterioration in the living conditions and treatment of prisoners over the past decade” in [Greece](#). The Committee also said that “a regulated prison system, as aspired to in law, has given way to the practice of warehousing prisoners.”

The [Irish](#) Inspector of Prisons found that low level intimidation of prisoners by some prison officials, overcrowding, filthy cells and broken windows are among the most serious problems in Limerick Prison. The Director General of the Prison Service said an action plan had been put in place to rectify the issues raised.

The Public Defender’s Office of [Georgia](#) has released monitoring reports on Zugdidi and Batumi penitentiaries. The monitors observed that both prisons were overcrowded, neither prison had central heating, in Zugdidi prisoners only had access to running water three times a day while in Batumi they only had access for one hour per day. Some foreign prisoners in Batumi did not have coverlets, spoons or plates because the prison administration was unable to provide them.

In the [US](#) the approximately 2,570 young people who are serving sentences of life without parole in adult prisons experience conditions that violate fundamental human rights, according to Human Rights Watch. The report found that nearly every such young person reported physical or sexual abuse by other prisoners or corrections officers, and commonly reported having thoughts of suicide, feelings of intense loneliness or depression. At least three young people serving life without parole have committed suicide in prison in the last five years.

In New Mexico, [US](#), a former prisoner has been awarded \$22 million in compensation after he was held in solitary confinement for almost two years. He never appeared before a judge and charges against him were eventually dropped. His health is said to have deteriorated as he became delirious from the time spent in solitary confinement. He lost a third of his body weight, his beard had grown to the length where it reached his chest, he had fungus on his skin, bed sores and toenails curling round his toes.

A prisoner in [Sweden](#) left prison without any trousers or shoes after being denied extra money to buy clothes. The prisoner said the trousers he wore when he entered prison no

longer fitted him. The prison argued that the prisoner had enough money among his personal items to buy new trousers and shoes, but the prisoner claims this would have left him without sufficient money to buy food.

The [New Zealand](#) organisation Rainbow Wellington has asked the Corrections Minister to reverse a policy placing transgender prisoners in the prison which matches the sex of their birth, unless the prisoners have had gender reassignment surgery. The organisation says this is not consistent with the prisoners' human dignity and places them at severe risk of sexual violence and consequent risk to their health through the contraction of HIV/AIDS.

In [Turkey](#) the Human Rights Association Istanbul Branch Prisons Commission has launched a campaign for the closure of F type prisons due to unhealthy conditions and rights violations. The campaign is based on three pillars: The effect of isolation on prisoners with an aggravated life sentence, who live on their own in an eight square meter room and have no communication with other prisoners; rights violations in prison such as disciplinary penalties, torture and ill treatment; and unhealthy living conditions including damp cells, heating which is non-operational in the winter, unhygienic drinking water and insufficient food. Also in [Turkey](#), the report of the Prison Monitoring Commission claims that prison administrations prevent letters from prisoners complaining about rights violations being sent to journalists. The report also says that many prisoners with health problems have not received medical treatment.

[Libyan](#) judicial police have started taking control of makeshift prisons in the country after human rights organisations complained of rampant torture of prisoners. The move comes after criticism from the UN's top human rights official and Amnesty International, and after aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres halted its work in detention centres in [Misrata](#) because it said its medical staff were being asked to patch up prisoners mid-way through torture sessions so they could be sent back for more abuse.

The government of [Zimbabwe](#) has issued a statutory instrument which sets out the daily diet to be given to prisoners, including one eighth of a loaf of bread, fresh vegetables, meat twice a week, and milk. The move is in response to criticism by human rights groups over many years which describe the country's prisons as hell holes that condemn prisoners to slow starvation and possible death from nutrition-deficiency related illnesses or many other diseases that they are exposed to through unhygienic conditions in the prisons.

More than 200 women were let out of prison in [Senegal](#) for 24 hours and taken to sites where they could meet with their families after the president declared a "day of giving" in which no women should be in prison. In addition the president pardoned 34 women who had been convicted of various crimes.

The [Tanzania](#) Journalists Alliance has started providing news material to prisons in the country to allow prisoners to get access to information. The prisoners will receive newsletters once per week under a programme dubbed HakiHabari (right to information). Also in [Tanzania](#), members of the House of Representatives Committee for Women and Social Welfare observed that life in Zanzibar's main prison has improved. They reported that

the prison is clean, prisoners get three meals a day, can watch television, and juvenile prisoners are separated from adults.

The [US](#) Bureau of Prisons is unveiling a programme that will allow many of its more than 200,000 prisoners to carry MP3 players containing personalised music lists, to help them pass the time. Prisoners will be able to choose music from a song list of around 1 million titles, but the list will be monitored to exclude “explicit” tracks, including material such as obscene or racially charged language.

Prison violence

Four prison officials were injured during unrest in the pre-trial detention centre-1 in Bishkek, [Kyrgyzstan](#). The unrest occurred after prison officials conducted a search of the centre, during which they discovered drugs and weapons. Following the search prisoners splashed boiling water in the faces of the officials, with four of them receiving burns.

In [Israel](#) a riot broke out at the Ma’asiyah prison resulting in a fire and several injuries. The incident began in Ward 14 when prisoners set fire to their clothing and mattresses. Four prisoners suffered serious injuries and four more suffered smoke inhalation and burns. The prisoners began the disturbance to protest their conditions of incarceration.

Almost 700 prisoners in a prison in southern [Thailand](#) rebelled against prison staff saying that one of the staff was too strict with them and demanding that the staff member be transferred. The prisoners burnt their mattresses, shattered glass windows with stones and bricks and hit the staff with rocks using a slingshot. In response to the riot 310 police officers were deployed to the prison.

Two prisoners were killed and six others injured when a gang related fight broke out in La Reforma, [Costa Rica](#)’s largest prison. The Justice Minister has been warning for many months that violence in the prisons would increase because of overcrowding due to a lack of money to build more prisons and hire more guards and support staff. In [Mexico](#) imprisoned members of the Zetas drug cartel killed 44 prisoners from the rival Gulf cartel and then staged a mass escape, apparently with the help of prison staff. In [El Salvador](#) at least three prisoners were murdered at the Chalatenago prison. The killings may be linked to a fight involving members of rival gangs.

The warden of Puertas de la Esperanza prison in northern [Nicaragua](#) was taken hostage when he tried to mediate between rival groups of prisoners who were pelting each other with rocks and went on to set a classroom on fire. At least 14 people were injured in the disturbance. The prisoners demanded the dismissal of two guards they accuse of abuses, better food, sporting equipment and cable television. The warden was released after six hours.

Five prisoners accused of rape and other sexual offences against minors were murdered in their cells in a prison in the [Venezuelan](#) state of Tachira. The [Venezuelan](#) Prisons Observatory has reported that 560 prisoners were killed in the country’s prisons in 2011, a 17.6 percent increase from 2010.

Developments in rehabilitation

Prisoners in Sabarmati central jail in [India](#) turned up in large numbers to elect nine representatives, known as ‘mantris’ who work closely with prison officials to look after departments such as the kitchen, canteen, welfare and education. A senior prison official said the elections are important because it gives those elected firsthand experience of how being a public servant works and prepares them for leadership roles in future, as well as giving them increased status and extra pay.

The Andhra Pradesh Prison Department in [India](#) has finalised plans to increase business turnover by opening eight more petrol filling stations and by increasing other revenue generating operations such as furniture making at the central prisons. A petrol pump is already operating successfully at Kadapa prison, and is run by 21 prisoners who have shown good conduct over a period of time and proved eligible for semi-open conditions. The prisoners work in shifts and each earns Rs 70 per day.

Prisoners in Sandakan, [Borneo](#), were given the opportunity to spend time with their families during celebrations for Chinese New Year. The eligible prisoners were those who possessed a good character and who showed a positive involvement in rehabilitation activities. The prison commissioner said the programme gave the prisoners the opportunity to build closer relationships with their families while increasing their confidence of being accepted by the community on release from prison.

Director of the Justice Bureau of Chaoyang District, Beijing has established [China](#)’s first community corrections institution, Chaoyang Sunshine Halfway House, which provides legal education, counselling, skills training, employment guidance and temporary room and board to prisoners who have been released or are serving sentences in the community. More than 1,100 people have so far received help from the centre and it is reported that none of them has gone on to commit further crime.

The [Malaysian](#) Prisons Department is moving towards correction instead of detention with the implementation of four programmes to rehabilitate prisoners outside the prison walls. The four programmes are the parole system, rehabilitation at army camps, the Compulsory Attendance Centre and halfway houses. Also in [Malaysia](#) some 200 civilians with expertise in certain disciplines have joined the Prisons Department as volunteers to assist in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

Prisoners in New Bilibid Prison in the [Philippines](#) have taken part in “Iron Bar Chef”, a cooking competition inspired by reality TV cooking show “Iron Chef”. The competition pitted six teams against each other, tasking them to create an appetiser, main course and a dessert in 60 minutes. The event is part of a wide-ranging rehabilitation programme that aims not only to reform prisoners but to cultivate their skills and prepare them for a possible return to the work force.

More than 960 prisoners at the Naivasha Maximum Prison in [Kenya](#) have graduated from a 12 week financial literacy training programme organised by Equity Bank. The prisoners are

all about to complete their prison terms and have been taught basic financial management and related entrepreneurial skills to boost their rehabilitation.

Under an agreement between the [Brazilian](#) government and local authorities in the 12 cities hosting the 2014 football World Cup games, at least five percent of the workers building or renovating the stadiums must be prisoners. The prisoners are selected after a rigorous evaluation process, and for every three days of work they complete they earn one day off their sentence.

Five penitentiaries and a detention centre in Tangarang, [Indonesia](#), are taking part in an art festival to be held at the Tangerang Men's Penitentiary. The event is aimed at encouraging the prisoners to participate in positive activities. Prisoners will participate in performances of dancing, music bands and traditional drum performances.

Kolkata's Alipore Correctional Home has become [India](#)'s first prison to house a permanent art gallery, in an initiative between the West Bengal government and the NGO Flight to Harmony Foundation. The 800 square foot gallery will be used to host exhibitions of prisoners' paintings along with those of professional painters.

In the [Maldives](#), around 100 prisoners from Maafushi and Asseyri prisons participated in the 2012 Inmates Creativity Fair. The prisoners, both men and women, produced paintings, handbags, jewellery, model ships and plant arrangements which were sold at the event. Prisoners who participate in the prison arts programme work from 9am to 3pm, with a break for lunch, and receive Rf900 (US\$360) per month.

The Rehabilitation and Prison Development Minister in [Sri Lanka](#) has said that prisoners convicted of minor offences who cannot pay their fines will be released at the expense of the government and employed in development activities in the country. The [Sri Lankan](#) government has also started a programme to build tourist centres in the country's prisons. The centres will have restaurants where tourists can taste food grown and prepared by the prisoners, and will have outlets that sell handicrafts made by the prisoners.

Sentencing and the law

In [Trinidad and Tobago](#), conjugal visits for convicted prisoners, as well as mandatory testing for HIV and AIDS are privileges to be afforded under the new Prison Rules being tabled in Parliament. The Justice Minister said the legislation would move away from retributive justice towards restorative justice and would lend support to a prisoner's re-entry into society, reducing recidivism and promoting the rehabilitation of prisoners.

The [Colombian](#) Constitutional Court has ordered that the rights of prisoners with diverse sexual identities be protected. Gay partners must be allowed conjugal visits, and jewellery, long hair and gender-ambiguous clothing on male prisoners should be allowed. The court said their ban was unjustified and violated human rights of freedom, equality, dignity and the free development of personality.

Following the introduction of stricter new rules, the Parole Board of [Canada](#) expects to evaluate about 15,000 pardon applications annually, down from 27,750. A new law passed in 2010 requires the board to assess the behaviour of applicants from the time of their conviction to ensure granting a pardon would not “bring the administration of justice into disrepute.” It means fewer people are expected to apply, and more will be screened out early on.

In the [US](#) everything from building air conditioning units to painting roads could be done by Alabama prisoners under a bill going through the state legislature which would allow the state to join a federal programme that lets private companies contract with the state to use prisoners as paid labour. Also in the US, the House of Delegates in [Virginia](#) has killed a bill that would have required the state to study ways to limit the use of solitary confinement in prisons, especially of those who are mentally ill. It also rejected a [bill](#) to restrict the use of restraints on pregnant women prisoners.

The government of [Bermuda](#) is to introduce legislation to set up two new courts to deal with prisoners out on licence or on parole, with judges and magistrates given powers to send released prisoners back to jail to finish their sentences for serious breaches of conditions for shorter periods for minor breaches. A new review court would check that former prisoners let out of prison before the end of their sentence are complying with all the conditions attached to their release, and a further re-entry court would decide on parole applications for early release considered by the existing Parole Board.

The Cabinet of [Guyana](#) has given approval for the formation of a prison sentence management board, which will target prisoners from the time of admission to prison in order to know who they are and what training is necessary to enable them to reintegrate into society on release.

In [Bahrain](#) discussions about a landmark bill that would overhaul the country’s prison system are continuing at the Shura Council. Members have approved a number of articles including one that would make it compulsory for transferred prisoners’ relatives to be notified on the first day they are moved, one that would make it compulsory for prisoners to receive guidelines – either verbal or written – on their first day of custody, explaining their rights and the facility’s rules, one requiring all deaths in custody to be reported to the Public Prosecution or other judicial bodies, and one allowing social supervisors to rehabilitate prisoners so they can be better reintegrated into society.

The Law Reform Commission in [Ireland](#) has published a consultation paper recommending a number of changes to sentencing guidelines, including the introduction of a minimum term length for people being sentenced to life for murder. The Commission also recommends reviewing minimum sentences for drug offences, saying that current sentencing has resulted in a “bulge” of the prison population but has had little serious impact on those at the top of the illegal drugs trade.

In [New Zealand](#) increasing numbers of people are being sentenced to either home detention, where they wear electronically monitored anklets ensuring they stay within the confines of their home, or community detention. Ministry of Justice figures show a 34.5

percent increase in home detention sentences between 2009 and 2010, and a 52 percent increase in people sentenced to community detention.

Prison policy

A prison in Maryland, [US](#), is to install a thermophilic anaerobic digester covering 3-4 acres which will produce about 1MW of electricity each year, with the electricity generated powering both the site and being fed onto the grid. The electricity will be created through the use of about 5,500 tonnes of poultry litter each year. The site, which houses about 3,000 prisoners, is working towards a target of having 20 percent of its energy derived from renewable sources by 2020.

In California, [US](#), the Governor has released a proposal to close the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) youth prisons and make the state the first to reform youth justice statewide. The proposal aims to end human rights violations permeating youth prisons and save the state money. The responsibility for jailing all youths would shift to local government, which has been proven in trial programmes to be effective and help restore broken homes and communities. The [Florida](#) Department of Corrections has announced that it is to close seven prisons and four work camps, saying that declining prison admissions has led to a surplus of prison beds.

Corrections Corporation of America, the [US](#)'s largest operator of for-profit prisons has sent letters to 48 states offering to buy up their prisons as a remedy for "challenging corrections budgets." In exchange the company is asking for a 20 year management contract, plus an assurance that the prison would remain at least 90 percent full. Meanwhile the United [Methodist Church](#) has withdrawn nearly \$1 million in stocks from two private prison companies. A spokesman for the board said "Our board simply felt that it did not want to profit from the business of incarcerating others."

The private operator of Mount Eden jail in [New Zealand](#) says there was no extra monitoring of a prisoner, despite the serial escapee's history. The Corrections Department has fined Serco New Zealand £150,000 over the breakout of a prisoner last October, and ordered the company to make a raft of changes focusing on policies and procedures, contingency management, staff competency, training and culture and the security of the building.

The [Irish](#) government has postponed its plans to build a new detention centre for teenage boys in north Co Dublin. It was hoped the facility would end the sustained international pressure on Irish authorities to stop the practice of sending youth offenders to prison. The plans have now effectively been shelved due to lack of funding. Also in [Ireland](#), prison visiting committees have seen their numbers depleted by more than half as the Justice Minister has opted not to reappoint or replace those committee members whose terms expired last year despite the posts being unpaid. Most committees now have fewer members than the minimum six laid down in legislation, and in some cases the number of members has fallen below the three needed to form a quorum for a meeting.

The head of the Department of Correctional Services in [Jamaica](#) has reiterated the need for new and better designed prisons in more isolated areas. The call comes after the latest in a

string of major security breaches as the Tower Street Adult Correctional Facility, one of the island's maximum security prisons. Both of the maximum security prisons for men on the island are in the centre of residential areas with houses built almost up against the walls of the prison, meaning that contraband can easily be thrown over the walls.

Representatives of about 40 organisations in [Saudi Arabia](#) have participated in a workshop discussing comprehensive prison reform programmes with the objective of enabling prisoners to eventually become productive members of society. The workshop discussed topics including evaluation and improvement of existing reform programmes; improving the working environment for implementing reform programmes, carrying out studies on setting up endowments to support programmes and ensuring participation of the private sector and businessmen.

The [Kenyan](#) Ministry of Home Affairs has announced proposals to improve prison conditions by decongesting the prisons. The permanent secretary in the ministry says about half of the current prisoners, more than 20,000, could be released by the end of the year through clemency. Currently the prisons hold 52,000 prisoners against capacity of 22,000. Those that will be released will be those jailed for petty crimes, and prisoners, including those on long sentences, who can demonstrate that they have changed their ways. The decongestion will allow resources to be concentrated on improving conditions for those who remain in prison.

A government commissioned report in the [Cayman Islands](#) concluded that a lack of transparency in the day to day operations of the Prison Service is hampering its effectiveness and leading to the belief that mistreatment inside the country's prisons is going unaddressed. A number of stakeholders provided examples of concern around excessive use of force, inappropriate use of strip searches, arbitrary decision making, administration of medicine to mentally ill prisoners and an ineffective complaint process.

Four major government agencies in [Thailand](#) have agreed to jointly tackle the drug trade in prison. The agencies are the Corrections Department, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) and the Anti-Money Laundering Office (Amlo).

The Justice Minister in [Lebanon](#) has set up a committee to see if his ministry can take control of the prison from the Interior Ministry and improve the country's widely criticised inconsistent detention practices and the poor living conditions inside prisons. The process could take three years.

The Inspector General of Prisons in Sindh Province, [Pakistan](#) has announced the immediate release of prisoners in Larkana Central Jail who only have two months left of their sentence, and the release of Rs400 million out of the Rs1.2 billion approved for the construction of new jails and repairs and renovation of the rest of Sindh prisons. The plan is to build two new jails in the district, and also to establish libraries and computer centres for the benefit of prisoners.

The authorities of the prison labour camp in Thaytaw Village in Arakan State, [Myanmar](#) have been hiring out prisoners as day labourers to the local farms and private industries to raise

funds. Those using the labour pay 2,000 Kyat per day, and a source said the labour camp authorities keep the money for themselves.

[Mali](#) has become the first African country to agree to take prisoners sentenced by the International Criminal Court. The Court's founding Rome Statute says sentences must be served in countries willing to accept those convicted by the ICC and includes Austria, Belgium, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, Britain and Serbia.

[Russia](#)'s Federal Penitentiary System has begun charging prisoners who escape with the expense of their recapture, with a court determining the amount they should pay. Even prisoners who unsuccessfully attempt to escape will face charges for any damages to prison property.

[India](#)'s Supreme Court has expressed serious concern over the inordinate delay in the release and repatriation of foreigners being held in the country's jails even after they have completed their sentence. The court directed the government to deport all foreigners in prison within a month to their home countries.

Government agencies in [New Zealand](#) are failing the children of Maori prisoners, leaving them traumatised and ill, and creating a new generation of offenders, a report has concluded. The report criticised police for arresting many offenders in front of their children and prisons for subjecting children to stringent searches when visiting their parents in prison. The children involved in the study exhibited serious health problems including eczema, asthma and psoriasis, and emerging behavioural and mental health problems.

The head of [Peru](#)'s prison system has acknowledged there is persistent corruption in the country's prisons. He said some prison staff are involved with the prison gangs and provide them access to cellphones. He said they were planning to change the terms of employment for all correctional officers who recently went on strike over salary disputes, and acknowledged that he understood why staff looked for alternative sources of income when they are poorly paid.

The [Peruvian](#) government has also approved an emergency decree that aims to improve security and expand the capacity of the country's prisons. The new decree would add room for 5,000 more prisoners across the country, and hire 1,000 prison staff. It would also reduce the timeframe for signing contracts and would allow for public-private partnerships that would allow for improved security measures in prisons, such as the jamming of cellphones inside prison blocks.

The Justice and Human Rights Minister of [Indonesia](#) has agreed to revive a proposal to set up 'biological rooms' in prisons to allow prisoners to have sex with their spouses during visits. The Ministry is deciding how to go about implementing the policy, including ensuring that prisoners were not charged money by prison staff to use the rooms, and preventing the facility from being used for prostitution.

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