



International Centre for Prison Studies

ICPS NEWS DIGEST

20th Edition – March - April 2014

Welcome to the twentieth 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 March to 30 April 2014. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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Prison populations

[European](#) states are failing to significantly reduce overcrowding in prisons despite the increasing number of people monitored by probation agencies, according to the newly published Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics which are based on a survey carried out in 2012. Overcrowding remained a serious problem in 21 prison administrations across Europe. Serbia, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary and Belgium continued to be the states where the situation was most acute. The report concludes that judicial bodies are often issuing very short custodial sentences, meaning that on average 20 percent of prisoners are serving less than one year. The report also notes that while there has been a significant increase in the number of persons under the supervision or care of probation services, many countries are not introducing enough alternatives to imprisonment and are seldom using these to replace pre-trial detention.

The [Italian](#) House has passed a major penal reform bill into law aimed at tackling the serious overcrowding in the country's prisons. The new law makes house arrest or detention in a healthcare facility the primary form of incarceration for lesser crimes, and the default form of detention for sentences of less than three years. The new law also decriminalises a number of charges, including undocumented immigration. Violations currently punishable

by a fine, such as the failure to make social security payments, will no longer be deemed a crime.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has called on authorities in [Croatia](#) to improve material conditions in prisons and to reduce overcrowding, notably at the Zagreb County Prison which was 225 percent over its 400 bed capacity. The CPT also criticised the procedures in place for the placement of prisoners in padded cells, as well as the safeguards surrounding disciplinary proceedings and the confidentiality of prisoners' complaints. In their response the Croatian authorities provided information on the measures taken to improve material conditions and the steps taken to ensure the strict application of the security measures rules including the placement of prisoners in padded cells.

Overcrowding remains a major problem in [Tunisian](#) prisons and preventive detention centres, a report of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded. The report noted that overcrowding exceeds 150 percent of capacity in some prisons, and reports that "overcrowding increases the risks of fights and violence between inmates and reduces the ability of prison guards to control the situation", citing the example of the civil prison in Kef where each prison guard is responsible for 76 prisoners.

In [Australia](#), prisoners at Queensland's biggest women's prison claim they are 'starving'. Lawyers said prisoners at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre were dramatically losing weight and constantly complained of hunger pains. The prison is reaching capacity and prisoners have been warned that mattresses will be placed on floors to allow three to a cell. The number of women is also putting strain on the sewerage system. The State government's 'tough on crime' policy is being blamed for the increase in prisoner numbers. In Western [Australia](#) the Corrective Services Minister has announced an urgent review of all correctional facilities to cope with a record number of people in prison. It will focus particularly on the crisis at Bandyup women's prison where numbers have almost reached a level where the prison can no longer be run safely.

Foreign prisoners in Nicosia Central Prison, the only prison in the Republic of [Cyprus](#), are to be transferred back to their own countries to serve their sentences, while those jailed for misdemeanours will be deported according to the Justice Minister, who announced the move as part of sweeping changes aimed at reducing overcrowding and the problems associated with it, particularly the risk of suicide. In addition the remaining prisoners will be reallocated within the prison according to length of sentence and level of risk.

[Italy](#)'s Justice Minister has signed an agreement to have Moroccan prisoners sent back home, in a move aimed at tackling chronic overcrowding in prisons. The agreement will affect Moroccans who have received a definitive conviction in Italy and have been sentenced to a year or more in prison. There are around 4,000 Moroccans in Italian prisons.

United Nations officials have expressed concern at the number of Maori in [New Zealand](#) prisons. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention looked at institutional racism in the criminal justice system and recommended that a review be undertaken of the degree of inconsistencies and systemic bias against Maori at all levels of the system. It says that if such

bias results in people being locked up then that constitutes arbitrary detention in violation of international law. Maori make up more than 50 percent of the prison population despite comprising around 15 percent of the general population, while more than 65 percent of women prisoners are Maori.

The President of [Tanzania](#) has pardoned nearly 4,000 prisoners and reduced every sentence by at least one sixth as part of the nation's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Those pardoned include those serving sentences of less than five years, those who have served a quarter of their sentence, and those prisoners who have HIV/AIDS, TB or terminal cancer. Other groups eligible for the amnesty are pregnant women, those who are breastfeeding, prisoners with mental or physical disabilities and those aged 70 or over.

The [South African](#) Correctional Services Ministry has reported that 384 prisoners who had been awaiting trial for more than two years had now either had their charges withdrawn, been released on bail or been sentenced. Section 49 G of the Correctional Services Act, which was implemented in July 2013, determines that a remand detainee may not be detained for a period exceeding two years without the matter being drawn to the attention of the court. There are still 1,816 prisoners who have been awaiting trial for more than two years who have yet to have their cases dealt with.

Some 40 magistrates in [Madagascar](#) took part in a workshop, organised by the Ministry of Justice and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), on the problem of prison overcrowding. Faster processing of criminal cases and the development of alternatives to pre-trial detention, release on probation and other measures were at the centre of discussions.

The [Peruvian](#) National Penitentiary Institute, in conjunction with the ICRC, held a round table debate on overcrowding in the country's prisons. Around 50 high-level government officials and representatives of civil society organisations discussed possible emergency measures to tackle the problem. Particular emphasis was placed on the problems of excessive delays in judicial proceedings and the indiscriminate use of 'preventive detention,' along with the need to improve prison infrastructure and provide alternatives to imprisonment.

A legislator in [Taiwan](#) is seeking a law change to allow more prisoners to be eligible to serve their sentences in minimum security prisons instead of the standard, severely overcrowded prisons. Currently two kinds of prisoners may be transferred to minimum security prisons: those who are sentenced to less than five years in prison and those with more than five years to serve whose sentence has been commuted due to good behaviour. The proposals keep the categories the same but expands eligibility to those who have a sentence of less than ten years or those who have a sentence of more than ten years which has been commuted for good behaviour.

Figures revealed show that more than 1,000 people are in prison in [Swaziland](#) because they are too poor to pay fines, representing nearly three in ten of the prison population. In the country those convicted of a minor offence are often given the option of paying a fine or

going to prison. However 70 percent of the national population live in abject poverty with incomes of less than US\$2 per day and so do not have the option of paying a fine. The Correctional Services Commissioner says the number of people imprisoned for non-payment of a fine is increasing and that such people should be given the option of paying fines in instalments rather than going to jail.

Health

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has said that [Argentina](#) authorities failed to ensure that a prisoner with disabilities was able to use prison facilities and services on an equal basis with other prisoners, and urged them to rectify the situation. The finding came after the Committee considered a complaint by a prisoner serving a life term who had suffered a stroke during pre-trial detention which resulted in a cognitive disorder, partial loss of vision and mobility problems which required him to use a wheelchair. The petitioner argued that prison conditions were affecting his mental and physical health. He said he could not maintain personal hygiene because he could not get to the bathroom on his own, and also said he had not received the rehabilitation recommended by his doctor as it required a 32 kilometre journey by ambulance to a specialist centre that risked aggravating his spinal problems.

In 44 [US](#) states and the District of Columbia at least one prison or jail holds more people with serious mental illnesses than the largest state psychiatric hospital, according to a report by the Treatment Advocacy Center and the National Sheriff's Association. Across the country an estimated 356,268 people with mental illnesses including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are in prisons and jails, compared to just 35,000 in state hospitals.

Also in the [US](#), following weeks of graphic court testimony and video footage of prisoners writhing in pain as they were sprayed with pepper spray, a federal judge has found that the use of force against mentally ill prisoners in California prisons is unconstitutionally harsh. Citing the "horrific" videos he viewed and a wealth of other evidence the judge ordered state officials to continue revising the use of force procedures deployed against the state's 33,000 mentally ill prisoners and to limit the use of solitary confinement as a means of disciplining such prisoners.

In [Canada](#) a restraining device being used in Ontario's jails has sparked concern about how prison officials are dealing with mentally ill prisoners. Called the 'restraint chair', prisoners are strapped into the device and monitored by video. The chair is used in 13 provincial prisons, with Ontario's correctional services ministry maintaining that it is needed to prevent self-injurious behaviour. Human rights groups argue that restraining people, particularly those who demonstrate self-injurious behaviour, can exacerbate the problem and often cause them to try harder to hurt themselves, and that people who have mental health issues and might be engaging in harmful behaviour should be dealt with in the health care system, not in prison.

A report has found that prison conditions in [Turkey](#) are not helping prisoners with psychological problems. According to figures provided by the Justice Ministry to the Civil Society in the Penal System Foundation (CISST) there is one psychologist for every 549

prisoners and one social worker for every 986. CISST also found that prison conditions are not suitable for people with disabilities, with a shortage of equipment for paralysed prisoners and those in wheelchairs. In addition the report noted that more than 1,200 people have died in prisons in Turkey since 2010.

An investigation has revealed that dozens of intellectually disabled Aboriginal people in [Australia](#) are being kept in prison indefinitely because of a lack of proper healthcare facilities. The report focused on the case of Rosie Anne Fulton who has spent the past 18 months in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia without a trial or conviction after she was charged with driving offences but is considered unfit to plead because she has the mental capacity of a young child. The Aboriginal Disability Justice Campaign says there are at least 30 other Indigenous people in a similar situation around the country.

The [New Zealand](#) Corrections Minister has announced that there has been a rise of almost 1,500 percent in places on drug and alcohol treatment programmes for prisoners since 2008. This financial year over 3,700 prisoners will have access to treatment for their addictions, rising to 4,700 next year and up from just 234 in 2007/8. The government has expanded the number of specialist Drug Treatment Units in prisons from six to nine, while there has been a fourfold increase in places in the Units.

Prisoners in [Uruguay](#) will be able to use medical marijuana if a doctor says it will benefit their health. The country's 'drug czar' told the press that any prisoners with doctors' orders will be prescribed marijuana to improve their medical or physical health.

The High Court in Gaborone, [Botswana](#), has ordered the government to provide HIV treatment to all non-citizen prisoners. Prior to the court order the government supplied foreign prisoners with treatment for opportunistic infections but not for HIV, leading to a significant deterioration in their health. Foreign prisoners were also expected to pay for HIV treatment themselves.

[Malaysia](#)'s Human Rights Commission has announced it is to carry out a comprehensive study on health conditions in detention centres, covering, among other things, the causes of deaths in custody and how they can be prevented. The Commission will look at issues including budgeting, manpower, facilities, the age of buildings, overcrowding and the wellbeing of prison staff. After the study they will submit their recommendations to the Health Ministry, the Prisons Department, the Treasury Department and the Prime Minister's Department.

The US State Department has classified the medical system throughout [Jamaica](#)'s prisons as "poor". There are only three full time doctors and one full time nurse on staff for a prison system of over 4,000 prisoners, and only four part time psychiatrists caring for the 225 diagnosed mentally ill prisoners. According to the report, "prisoners in need of dentures and unable to eat the prison food encountered difficulties gaining access to a dentist", and "prison food was poor and prison authorities frequently ignored inmates' dietary restrictions."

A court in Milan, [Italy](#), has handed a prison psychologist a suspended eight month prison sentence for failing to prevent the suicide of a prisoner under her care who hanged himself with a sheet. The court found the psychologist guilty of involuntary manslaughter finding that she had underestimated the prisoner's suicidal tendencies, even though he had already tried to kill himself eight times and two prison psychiatrists had diagnosed him as psychotic and afflicted by persecution mania just a month prior to his death. Separately, the [Italian](#) Society of Psychiatrists as well as the prisoners' rights group Ristretti Orizzonti has warned that the number of suicides in the country's prisons has peaked in the first months of 2014, with 40 percent of all deaths in prisons being reported as suicide.

Treatment of prisoners

In the [US](#), Colorado lawmakers have approved legislation that limits the use of solitary confinement for prisoners, a year after the state's head of corrections was killed by a parolee who spent the bulk of his sentence in solitary confinement. The bipartisan measure would require that the case of any prisoner in isolation be reviewed every 90 days, and would also establish a gradual step-down process for prisoners held in solitary confinement or administrative segregation before their release. The proposal has now gone to the state Governor who is expected to sign it into law.

The [Nigerian](#) Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is undertaking an audit of all prisons and detention facilities in the country. The endeavour is aimed at ensuring that all places of detention are designed and managed in a way that is compatible with human rights standards. The NHRC has been conducting periodic audits of places of detention since 1999 and has made recommendations for their improvement.

The [Bahraini](#) Public Prosecution has ordered an investigation into a hunger strike in the country's largest prison. Over 250 prisoners went on hunger strike and attacked guards at Jaw prison after they were told that phone calls to their families and break times were to be reduced. Prosecutors questioned 236 prisoners and a medical examiner checked those who claimed to have been mistreated in custody.

At least 1,500 [Egyptian](#) prisoners detained during anti-government rallies went on a collective hunger strike to protest against being mistreated in detention. The prisoners, who are being held at the Abu Zaabal prison in the Nile Delta, say the charges brought against them are politically motivated, and many of them are being held without charge or trial. They also complained about the quality of food and their deteriorating health, and said that prison authorities had been denying them regular visits.

The [Turkish](#) Human Rights Association (IHD) and the families and attorneys of prisoners are calling for the closure of F-type prisons, accusing the facilities of inhumane treatment and of not properly caring for critically ill prisoners. People convicted of belonging to armed organisations, organised crime, drugs offences, and those sentenced to life imprisonment are held in the F-type prisons, where many are held in isolation from other prisoners. The IHD said conditions in the prisons, including the isolation system, damage the physical and psychological well being of prisoners, as do the arbitrary implementation of laws and regulations concerning the treatment of prisoners.

One prisoner in the Garu Satellite Prison in Jigawa State, [Nigeria](#), died after he suffocated due to extreme congestion in his cell in intense heat. The prison, which was established in 1930, was designed to hold 50 prisoners but was holding over 160. The Nigerian Bar Association has called for the Minister of the Interior and the Comptroller-General of the Prison Service to address the situation.

Living conditions at Roebourne Regional Prison in Western [Australia](#) have been described as “intolerable and inhumane” in a report by the Inspector of Custodial Services. The report said most prisoners lived without air conditioning in a region known for consecutive days of temperatures above 40 degrees during the summer months. The situation is exacerbated by the holding of six prisoners in cells which have been designed for four. The report also found that little had been done to address the serious substance abuse problems that most of the prisoners had, and that many education and training initiatives to prepare prisoners for future employment had been dropped.

In [Canada](#) the laws governing the territory of Nunavut’s correctional services may be non-compliant with the Charter of Rights, according to a report by two lawyers from the federal Office of the Correctional Investigator. The report highlights the appalling state of a prison housing mainly Inuit prisoners, where the authors found that cells were covered in mould, prisoners were forced to share permanently stained underwear, and some prisoners had to sleep on mattresses on concrete floors due to a lack of beds. In addition, the Nunavut Corrections Act and related regulations had remained “practically unchanged” for about 25 years and contained references to practices that “may be inconsistent with the Charter or evidence-based correctional policy.” The Nunavut Department of Justice said that extensive work was underway to address the situation.

Female prisoners in [Zimbabwe](#)’s smaller prisons have been badly affected by a critical shortage of sanitary wear and other basics such as soap and toothpaste, according to the Female Prisoners Support Trust. The Trust said that for some time now, donors have diverted their attention from the smaller prisons as the situation at the larger facilities needed urgent attention due to the high numbers of prisoners held in them. This means that the smaller prisons are not receiving necessities and the Trust has warned that a health hazard is looming as some female prisoners were being forced to resort to unhealthy alternatives.

Sanitary conditions at the Sekondi Central Prison in [Ghana](#) are deteriorating to the point that all 714 male prisoners currently share only three toilets. Prisoners queue for long hours to use the toilets, a situation which sometimes compels them to defecate on themselves or in plastic bags. The prisoners also have access to only two showers and there is an acute water shortage. In addition the prison has been hit by outbreaks of tuberculosis and chicken pox. The Deputy Eastern regional minister has said the regional coordinating council will liaise with the health ministry to see what measures can be taken to deal with the situation.

Staff and prisoners at Portlaoise Prison in [Ireland](#) will have to continue to put up with ‘slopping out’ in the prison’s high security E block until a promise of investment is delivered by the government. The installing of toilets in 60 cells at the prison is promised by 2016

under the Irish Prison Service investment plan which was published two years ago. The project is currently listed as “capital dependent” and still at the pre-planning stage.

A growing number of prisoners in [France](#) are being mistreated because they report some of the problems in the prisons, according to a report by France’s controller general of prisons. The report notes that prisoners who report the deplorable prison conditions to the authorities have a worse time than violent or unruly prisoners. Watched over by prison staff, prisoners who dare to complain suffer constant threats and retaliation, from the non-delivery or the opening of letters to threats of transfer. They also faced extra searches and are left out of some daily activities.

The strip search of a woman by a male prison guard in Hobart Reception Prison in Tasmania, [Australia](#), which was viewable by other officers, has been described as a “one-off”. However the Justice Department declined to say whether all Tasmanian prisons now have operational “privacy cells” that limit who can watch a strip search from another room. In the year to June the prison’s guards conducted 1,946 strip searches, 267 of them on women, and all potentially outside of the “privacy cell.”

The [Brazilian](#) organisation Conectas has delivered testimony to the UN Human Rights Council from women who have relatives in prison who were subjected to invasive search procedures when visiting their relatives. The document gives examples of cases where women visitors were given a full hand search, including inside their genitals. Pregnant women and infants were also subjected to these procedures. Visitors were also made to fully undress and squat. The organisation has called on the UN to ask Brazil to put an immediate end to the practice.

Prison violence

Investigators in [Russia](#) have opened a criminal case into mass riots at a prison in Klintsky, a town in the Bryansk region. About 120 prisoners locked themselves in one of the prisons’ rooms and threw furniture, mattresses and flaming bedsheets out of the windows. Parts of the roof were also torn down and set alight during the incident. Some prisoners said they had rioted because the prisons’ staff were turning a blind eye to foul play being committed by a group of “privileged” prisoners.

At least five prisoners died and another eight were injured during a riot in the Eunapolis prison in the [Brazilian](#) state of Bahia. The riot began when prison guards announced a surprise inspection of the cells and ended around eight hours later when authorities managed to bring the situation under control with the help of the military police. The deaths were attributed to a dispute between two gangs of prisoners who allegedly took advantage of the confusion generated by the riot to attack their rivals. Six prisoners also died in a fire set during a riot at the Coaraci prison for pre-trial prisoners in the [Brazilian](#) state of Belem. Rioting prisoners set fire to mattresses in a cell holding 32 people, and the prisoners died when they were trapped in the cell.

Two prisoners died after a riot broke out at a [Paraguayan](#) juvenile prison, and two guards were arrested for using lethal force. The Justice Vice Minister said the riot broke out when a

group of prisoners set fire to mattresses. The prison guards apparently opened fire on the prisoners with live ammunition, violating rules that require the use of rubber bullets at juvenile prisons. The local police commissioner said the rioters were apparently demanding more television time at the prison.

There is a high rate of violence inside [French](#) juvenile detention facilities, where aggression from young detainees is tolerated with a certain resignation by prison staff and aided by victims and their parents turning a blind eye, as though there is little or nothing to be done about it. This warning comes from a report by the director general of French detention centres. The report highlights the case of Villeneuve-lès-Maguelone which reported 24 cases of serious assault last year. The report suggests episodes of violence are much higher than statistics suggest.

Two prison guards and one operational manager in Ontario, [Canada](#), have been charged with failing to provide the necessities of life in the killing of prisoner Adam Kargus. Mr Kargus was serving time for using a false ID to get tax refunds and cell phones. He was put in a cell with a prisoner who had a history of violence against other prisoners who went on to beat Mr Kargus to death. The charges against the staff came after a police investigation which looked at decisions made by the staff before the killing.

Developments in rehabilitation

The [Singapore](#) Prison Service has announced plans to share prisoners' records with relevant parties that provide aftercare services for people leaving prison, in order to aid with the transition to the community after release. It is also boosting training for volunteers and professionals in the area.

Approved prisoners at the privately run Mt. Eden Correctional Facility in Auckland, [New Zealand](#), are being given free mobile phones in a bid to stop them from committing further crime. In the pilot scheme prisoners who are about to be released are given a basic phone loaded with pre-approved support service numbers to assist with their reintegration.

More than half of prisoners in [Uruguay](#) are working or taking courses, with some prisons boasting a 100 percent working and course enrolment rate. The achievement stems from the 2010 creation of the National Rehabilitation Institute (INR) which took over the prison system in conjunction with the Prisoners Board of Trustees. Since then the purpose of the prisons has been concentrated on rehabilitation, which is measured in relation to work, study, culture, sports and recreation. The pathway to release is also based on a progression: as prisoners improve they are transferred to prisons with less security until they are eventually released.

The [Cypriot](#) Justice Minister has launched a football tournament between Nicosia Central Prisons and local clubs. The tournament, titled 'Building Bridges,' is part of the government's move to modernise the prison system. The Minister also announced that living conditions at the prison had been improved. This included an extension of the supply of hot water, electricity 24 hours a day, use of video games, open visiting hours for all prisoners, an

increase in the number of phone calls, and more time to spend playing football, badminton and volleyball.

Prisoners throughout [Malaysia](#) produced goods worth RM21.5 million through the National Dual Training System in 2013. Launched in 2012, the rehabilitation programme has benefitted 5,963 prisoners, with 3,573 of them gaining skills certificates in 44 fields including carpentry, farming, food preparation, craftsmanship, beauty therapy and fabric making. The Prisons Department has also saved on costs by undertaking farming and food production projects carried out by prisoners and staff through a self-sufficiency programme which began in 2013.

Also in [Malaysia](#), a total of 95 percent of the 13,804 prisoners who underwent rehabilitation programmes outside of the prison in the past two years have gained employment. The Ministry of Home Affairs said the success was due to the collaboration with agencies such as the National Entrepreneur Group Economic Fund, 1Azam Program and the Department of Fisheries.

[Sri Lanka](#)'s very first prison school has been declared open by the President and consists of a computer lab with forty computers and a science laboratory. The initiative was undertaken by the Prisons Department and the Education Ministry, and the Prison Commissioner said prisoners who had not sat for their GCE Ordinary Level and Advanced level examinations would be allocated to the school. The main objective of the initiative is to provide education for prisoners aged between 20- 30.

The Naivasha G.K Prison in [Kenya](#) has announced plans to release on probation all prisoners who perform well in national examinations. The announcement came in the wake of a good performance by some of the prisoners in the 2013 KCSE exams. The move by the prison aims to motivate prisoners to continue their education while in prison.

Prisoners at Tongariro Rangipo Prison in [New Zealand](#) are raising hens donated by a local farm and donating the eggs to local food banks. The Principal Corrections Officer noted "It gives the men a real source of pride to be able to help out in this way and looking after the animals also gives them a great sense a responsibility. Some of them may have never felt this kind of gratification before and it can help to start to give them a new outlook on life. Sometimes being able to help someone else is the best way to make changes in their own lives and break that cycle of offending."

Sentencing and the law

The Lagos State Government in [Nigeria](#) said that, through its new justice administration system, it was encouraging the use of community service as a punitive measure for those convicted of minor crimes in the state. It disclosed that about 2,595 people were sentenced to community service in the last year. The move aims to help decongest the state's overcrowded prisons.

Non-custodial penalties such as community service and corrections programmes will be increasingly considered as part of a major effort to protect human rights in [China](#), according

to the Minister of Justice. According to the Ministry of Justice there are 697,000 people participating in community corrections programmes, an increase from 204,569 in 2009. The Ministry also plans to establish a platform to share information between judicial organs, including the public security department, prosecuting authorities, courts and the prison system.

A City Representative in the [Philippines](#) has filed a measure that will impose mandatory community service instead of imprisonment for some non-serious offences. House Bill 3903 provides rendition of community service in lieu of detention for prisoners who are serving sentences ranging from one day to six months and those with six months or less remaining of their sentence. The Bill also provides for a preparatory rehabilitation phase for prisoners before they join society.

The [US](#) Justice Department has announced that it will widen the criteria it uses to decide which drug offenders to recommend to the president for clemency. The Department expects thousands of drug offenders currently serving prison sentences to be eligible for reduced sentences under the new guidelines. The move is part of the Obama administration's strategy to reduce spending on federal prisons by reducing the number of prisoners serving sentences for non-violent drug crimes.

The Conservative government's attempt to detain thousands of prisoners for longer periods has been blocked by the Supreme Court of [Canada](#). The government had tried to stop judges from acting in what it saw as an excessively generous way toward prisoners who have not received bail. Canada has a high number of people in prison awaiting trial, and judges have been routinely giving them extra credit for the time they serve, to count toward their ultimate sentence if convicted. The Supreme Court said Friday the practice is rooted in traditional sentencing principles and can continue.

The [Japanese](#) Diet has enacted a law to stiffen punishment for juvenile offenders, including longer prison terms. Juveniles who commit crimes that would earn them life sentences if they had been adults currently face a limit of 15 years in prison. Less severe offences are capped at ten years. The new law extends these two upper limits to 20 years and 15 years, respectively. The Japanese Federation of Bar Associations has criticised the move, saying that subjecting juveniles to longer prison terms is "tantamount not only to alienating them so much that swift rehabilitation becomes difficult, but also to raising the risk of recidivism." New legislation, which will allow unpaid fines to be collected through instalments, will shortly come into force in [Ireland](#). It marks the end of defaulters automatically being sent to prison for failing to pay fines imposed by the courts. The Justice Minister noted that more than 8,000 people were sent to prison in 2013 for non-payment of fines, and he was confident that under the new system this number would be greatly reduced.

In [Australia](#) the Queensland Law Society has said mandatory sentencing is an "undue fetter" on judicial discretion, is arbitrary and has the potential to lead to "serious miscarriages of justice," as well as being "unfair and unworkable" and running contrary to the fundamental principles of the Australian legal system. The state government has introduced a least ten new mandatory sentences for crimes including for sex offenders who remove or tamper

with their monitoring bracelets and people found to be members of criminal motorcycle gangs.

In Victoria, [Australia](#), the Attorney General has introduced a bill to Parliament which would lengthen sentences for murder and commercial drug trafficking beyond what the Sentencing Advisory Council has recommended. The average sentence for murder would be raised to 25 years and the average sentence for trafficking a commercial quantity of drugs would be doubled to 14 years. This contrasts with the Council's recommendation in a 2012 report that the baseline sentences for these crimes should be set at 20 years and nine years respectively. The president of Liberty Victoria said harsher sentences would further add to the prison population and could make the community less, not more safe.

The [Dominican Republic](#)'s Chamber of Deputies has approved the new Penal Code, which provides for concurrent sentences of up to 60 years in prison; raises the maximum penalty from 30 to 40 years and punishes femicide with 40 years in prison. The legislation will now go to the Senate which is expected to approve it.

In [Malaysia](#) the Prevention of Crime (Amendment and Extension) Act 2013, which allows suspected criminals to be detained without trial for up to two years, has come into force. The Deputy Home Minister stressed that the Act would always be used by authorities as a last resort.

Judges in [Cambodia](#) are now required to write a reasoned explanation when placing people in pre-trial detention, instead of simply checking a box as was previously practiced, the Justice Minister has announced. The Minister said the changes were introduced due to the lack of transparency in the courts when such decisions were made. The Minister has also disseminated three circulars that urge judges to consider alternatives to pre-trial detention. These include judicial supervision, the provision of suspended sentences with probation and the implementation of community service orders.

Prison policy

Joining a growing trend in the [US](#), the New Mexico Department of Corrections has announced it is to end its 30 year policy of allowing prisoners overnight visits with their partners and families. That change means New Mexico is the latest state to end what used to be a common practice across the country. Mississippi, for example, ended its conjugal visit policy earlier this year despite criticism from some civil rights groups, while only four states – California, Connecticut, New York and Washington – still allow the practice.

The [Turkish](#) Ministry of Justice has announced plans for the construction of a prison exclusively for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) prisoners. The Minister said that LGBT prisoners are currently segregated for their own safety and that prison administrators ensured they were not placed with heterosexual prisoners in shared spaces such as social areas. According to the most recent figures available, in April 2013 there were 81 prisoners who openly declared their sexual orientation to prison authorities. However the actual number of LGBT prisoners is likely to be higher as most fear revealing their sexual identity due to the risk of abuse.

[Belgium](#)'s first open prison for women is due to open in 2016. The prison, which will have room for 100 female prisoners, is to be built on the site of a new prison complex, but outside of the perimeter wall. The prison is being built in recognition of the fact that not all women need to be held in traditional secure regimes, and that semi-open and open conditions are needed to prepare prisoners for reintegration into society.

Also in [Belgium](#), for the first time the country adopted a system whereby justice professionals spend a weekend posing as prisoners to test out systems before a new prison opens. Lawyers, judges, wardens, journalists and Belgium's director of prisons all stayed in the newly built Beveren system. Each visitor was given a role to play and went through the whole routine of admission, strip search, processing, showers, canteen and lights out. The initiative uncovered a number of problems with the prison's technology.

In [Canada](#) provincial funding cuts have forced Alberta's only on-reserve correctional centre to close. The Kainai Corrections Society minimum security facility had been operating for 25 years and was the only centre in the province to offer programmes solely for aboriginal prisoners. The director of the centre said the closure would have a big impact on First Nation prisoners who were now likely to be moved into the general prison population of other facilities.

Plans announced by the [Netherlands](#) government to make prisoners pay €16 per day towards the cost of keeping them in prison have been condemned by lawyers, judges and legal experts. The country's three big law associations want the junior justice minister to abandon the plan, saying it will increase debt and make it more likely that prisoners will commit further crime on release. Prisoners and the parents of juveniles would be liable to pay the charge for a maximum of two years, costing them up to €11,680. Prisoners in the country earn no more than €15 a week so cannot earn enough to pay the costs.

In [Australia](#) the ACT government has announced it will close its Periodic Detention Centre by 2016-17, a move signalling the end of weekend imprisonment throughout the country. Periodic detention is designed to keep prisoners with good prospects of rehabilitation away from full time custody because of their age, the nature of their crime, their criminal history or other personal factors. It aims to help them to desist from further offences by allowing them to remain in the community throughout the week to work or have the support of their family network. The government said the use of weekend detention had become outdated and that instead they wanted to try using stronger community sentencing options to divert people away from custody.

The [Irish](#) Prison Service is considering plans from a firm offering to provide prisoners who have been refused temporary release to attend the funeral of family members or friends the chance to watch a live online stream of the service from prison. The Prison Service said the proposal would be considered, noting that they recognised the need for prisoners to maintain relations with their families.

The [US](#) Justice Department's proposed \$27.4 billion budget reflects the Attorney General's priority of criminal justice and prison reform. The budget includes £173 million in targeted

investments for criminal justice reform efforts, including a “smart on crime” initiative to reduce the number of low level drug offenders in prison and reduce recidivism rates by expanding drug treatment programmes. The budget also requests \$15 million for US attorneys, including prevention and re-entry work and promoting alternatives to imprisonment such as the establishment of drug courts and veteran courts. Another \$15 million would go towards expanding the federal residential drug abuse programme, and \$14 million would assist prisoners with re-entering society and reducing the population of individuals who return to prison after being released.

Tougher detention conditions, separate prisons and specially designed cells, as well as no furloughs, are some of the changes proposed for dangerous prisoners held in [Greek](#) prisons in a new bill introduced in parliament. The bill also introduces a new classification system for the country’s prisons, with Type A prisons holding those convicted for debts and generally all those serving sentences of up to five years; Type B holding those convicted of middle range offences and Type C holding those classified as high risk.

The Director General of Prisons in [Ghana](#) has commissioned a transformational taskforce to help bring the prisons up to United Nations standards. The taskforce, which draws together members from all the departments of the service, will assess the current situation and build a solid foundation for the transformation of the system. The taskforce will also check on the level of congestion in various prisons throughout the country and make recommendations for decongestion and advise capacity building measures for staff members.

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