



International Centre for Prison Studies

ICPS NEWS DIGEST

21st Edition – May-June 2014

Welcome to the twenty first 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 May to 30 June 2014. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

Please note that ICPS is not responsible for the accuracy of external content.

Prison populations

Close to three million people are held in pre-trial detention and other forms of remand imprisonment throughout the world, according to the second edition of the World Pre-trial/Remand Imprisonment List, published by ICPS and available [here](#).

The average daily number of full time prisoners in [Australia](#) has risen by nine percent since March 2013, with the number of female prisoners increasing by 14 percent, according to new data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The data also showed that the number of people serving community-based orders in the same period increased by 2,314 while there was a decrease in the number serving bail orders (101) and parole orders (250).

The system for transporting prisoners in Victoria, [Australia](#), is struggling due to the increasing prison population, according to the state auditor general who found that a 66 percent increase in prisoner numbers in the past 12 years was putting “significant pressure” on the corrections system. As a result of overcrowding in jails, since June 2013 increasing numbers of prisoners have been housed in police cells attached to courts, and have to be transported when other prisoners are scheduled to appear before a magistrate. One prisoner tracked by the auditor general was detained in 14 places, moved 40 times and escorted between police cells and court 26 times. Between September and December 2013,

618 prisoners had their court appearances adjourned because there was no space to house them.

The amnesty granted by [Zimbabwean](#) President Robert Mugabe in February, under which 2,000 prisoners were released, has not improved the dire situation in the country's overcrowded prisons, according to reports that suggest that nearly all of the prisons have again exceeded their capacity. The Deputy Commissioner said that many of those released had returned to prison, a situation he attributed to society's refusal to accommodate former prisoners and the government's policy of not allowing the employment of ex-prisoners or anyone with a criminal record.

The [Colombian](#) authorities have released more than 10,000 prisoners in the past four months to alleviate the overcrowding in the prison system. Congress approved reforms to the penal code in December allowing prisoners who have served 60 percent of their sentence, demonstrated good behaviour and have stable social and family ties to be eligible for release. Since the change went into effect on 20th January about 2,000 prisoners have had their sentences suspended, while another 6,596 have been released on parole and 1,572 have been placed under house arrest. The Colombian National Penitentiary Institute is processing a further 15,000 applications from prisoners seeking early release. The Riohacha prison in [Colombia](#) is overcrowded by 438 percent, according to a report released by government human rights observers. The prison, which was built to hold 100 prisoners, was holding 538 people making it the most overcrowded prison in the country. The national Ombudsman's Office called for immediate measures to guarantee the human rights of the prisoners who lack basic services and live in what the report calls "deplorable conditions," with prisoners sleeping on top of each other.

Concern has been expressed about conditions at [Thailand's](#) Phuket Prison, where 2,807 men and women are being held in accommodation built to hold 750. Prisoners are forced to sleep on their sides, and when one turns over the others must do the same. Prisoners are only allowed four scoops of water with an ice cream container to wash with, and are locked in their dormitories for 15 hours a day.

The UN Committee Against Torture has voiced concerns about overcrowding and prison conditions in [Lithuania](#). The Committee expressed concern at the duration and the high number of people held in pre-trial and administrative detention, and noted that pre-trial detention is not used as a measure of last resort. The Committee also expressed concern over material conditions, such as hygiene, access to natural light, ventilation and clean mattresses and bedding.

[Canadian](#) prisons are so full that many prisoners are forced to 'double bunk' in shared cells, even though corrections officials recognise this breeds violence and poses a risk to prisoners and staff in the prisons, according to a report released by the Auditor General. Moreover, the report notes that although recent construction will resolve the overcrowding in the short term, Correctional Service Canada has failed to develop expansion plans for its prisons to properly take into account the growing number of prisoners.

Serious overcrowding, violence and cuts in resources have impacted on prisoners in the [Irish](#) prison system, according to the Visiting Committees. Reports on eight prisons highlight many examples of good or improving practice in some of the prisons, but also persistent or growing problems, often involving drugs and violence. Some of the most serious issues were reported in the Dochas women's prison, where chronic overcrowding resulted in women sleeping in recreation rooms, and in St Patrick's Institution where the library was destroyed in a riot in March. Data released by the [Irish](#) Department of Justice shows that five of the country's prisons have up to a third more prisoners than they have capacity for.

[Colombian](#) authorities have released more than 10,000 prisoners in the past four months to alleviate the overcrowding in the prison system. Congress approved reforms to the penal code in December allowing prisoners who have served 60 percent of their sentence, demonstrated good behaviour and have stable social and family ties to be eligible for release. Since the change went into effect on 20th January about 2,000 prisoners have had their sentences suspended, while another 6,596 have been released on parole and 1,572 have been placed under house arrest. The Colombian National Penitentiary Institute is processing a further 15,000 applications from prisoners seeking early release.

The Council of Europe has praised the "significant results" of [Italy's](#) prison reform, following a damning report by the European Court of Human Rights 18 months ago. The ministers reported "an important and continuing drop in the prison population." However prison rights group Antigone reported that despite the reforms [Italy's](#) prisons remain seriously overcrowded with prisoners describing the conditions as harsh and severe.

Under a sweeping penal system reform which was voted on provision by provision in front of the National Assembly, [French](#) lawmakers approved a ban on imprisoning pregnant women and have backed the creation of a new type of probation that could replace prison sentences of up to ten years. Assembly members have also voted to end the mandatory minimum sentences introduced under President Sarkozy, which some activists have blamed for the rapid increase in the prison population. The legislation now has to go before the Upper House of Parliament.

[Greece's](#) Deputy Finance Minister has approved the release of €1 million from the state budget for a one year pilot programme under which some prisoners would be fitted with electronic ankle bracelets in order to reduce the overcrowding in the country's prisons. The bracelets will initially be fitted on 200 prisoners, 100 already convicted and 100 awaiting trial. Prisoners will have to pay €15 per day to qualify for the programme, while those convicted of terrorism or membership of a criminal organisation will not be eligible. Those serving life sentences will be eligible after they have completed two thirds of their sentence.

The [Lebanese](#) Interior Minister has met with the country's banking leaders in a bid to convince them to fund an ambitious reform programme in the country's prisons. The Minister showed them a video report on the country's largest prison, Roumieh, which was described as a "ticking time bomb" with 3,600 prisoners held in a facility designed to hold just 1,050. The prison lacks clean water for days at a time, and 156 prisoners suffer from transferrable, dangerous and/or chronic illnesses with no healthcare to speak of. The overcrowding leads to inhumane conditions of the prisoners, who on average have one

twelfth of the living space recommended by international standards. The proposed reform plan includes the renovation of the prison, the construction of four new prisons, and the development of a proper health care programme along with social and educational rehabilitation. The banking leaders have not yet announced whether they will support the project.

Health

In the [US](#), condoms could eventually be distributed to prisoners in California under a bill moving forward in the state Senate. The bill, which has already passed the state Assembly, would direct state officials to develop a five year plan to hand out condoms in the state's prisons. The initiative would not change the current law which criminalises sexual acts between prisoners regardless of consent. Opponents of the proposal say that prisoners could use condoms to store contraband, while backers say it could help cut down on high rates of sexually transmitted diseases among prisoners.

Key recommendations of the [Australian](#) Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody are yet to be addressed, 23 years after the report was handed down, according to University of Adelaide architectural anthropologist Dr Elizabeth Grant. Dr Grant's paper notes that "the number of Indigenous deaths in custody continues to be unacceptably high. Growing numbers of Indigenous prisoners have chronic illnesses, substance abuse problems, learning and cognitive disabilities and mental illnesses."

The [Canadian](#) federal government has moved forward with cuts to nursing hours at federal prisons despite concerns from correctional officers and nurses. Many prisons across the country are now operating with reduced hours, with some prisons dropping from 24 hour to 12 hour care. Correctional Service Canada has defended the move saying the office was reallocating resources to "ensure that health services are equivalent at all institutions." However the unions representing nurses and prison guards are concerned that the changes will have a negative impact on the prison population and will put more stress on correctional employees.

The [Egyptian](#) Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) has released a report which found that "living conditions and health conditions in prisons are not in line with the minimum components of rights to health, both on the level of access and quality of health services, and the competence of the healthcare staff," which lead to the endangerment of prisoners' lives. With regards to physical conditions, the report noted that food, toilets, hygiene, lighting, ventilation and exercise "lacked the requisite support from the prison administration." The report concludes with a number of recommendations for the prison authorities, including the development of a legal mechanism to ensure access to healthcare when in need, providing for the specific needs of women and their children, and permitting independent agencies to monitor prison facilities.

The general health of prisoners in six major [Saudi Arabian](#) cities is deteriorating and a number of them have contracted infectious diseases, according to the Human Rights Commission (HRC). An HRC source said the health facilities in the prisons were not sufficient or working properly, with the hospitals lacking modern medical equipment, qualified

medical staff and medicines for a number of diseases. The HRC called for close coordination between prison management and local Health Affairs departments to ensure prisoners are receiving good healthcare.

More than 6,000 prisoners across [Ghana](#) have benefited from a health screening exercise organised by the Ministry of Health. A spokesman said the government had acquired eight mobile clinics which visit the prisons, where medical personnel treat prisoners for illnesses such as malaria, diabetes, hypertension, infections of the ear, nose, throat and eyes, and provide dental care. He said following the visits the medical team would analyse the data gathered and advise the government on measures to improve the health of prisoners.

Over 2,600 prisoners have been treated for scabies in an eradication campaign run by the [Malian](#) prison authorities with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). A representative noted that overcrowding makes prisons a prime breeding ground for certain diseases, especially skin infections, and that scabies was a real problem. All of the prisoners and staff were treated, and buildings, clothes and bedding were disinfected. The ICRC is also working in close cooperation with the prison authorities and the National Health Directorate to improve prisoners' access to healthcare, including ensuring they undergo a medical examination when they first arrive, and stocking prison infirmaries with the necessary medicines.

The Correctional Investigator of [Canada](#) has expressed his disappointment that a pilot project announced by the federal government to provide more beds in mental health facilities for female prisoners with serious mental illnesses adds just two beds. The project was announced in response to a coroner's jury investigation into the 2007 prison death of Ashley Smith, who choked herself to death in her cell while guards looked on. While the project is supposed to test a new model of care, the Investigator says he is not sure why it's not a permanent project and why it is so small.

Treatment of prisoners

The Constitutional Chamber of the [Costa Rican](#) Supreme Court revealed that over 30 prisoners imprisoned in the maximum security wing of La Reforma prison claimed to have been beaten and mistreated by prison guards. A statement from the Court said the complaints demonstrated a pattern of abuse during a short period of time. A local paper reported that the prisoners accused the guards of beating and kicking them, and using chemical gas on their eyes, mouths and genitals. Some accused guards of forcing their fingers into prisoners' anuses. The Court has ordered the Justice Ministry to present a plan to address the alleged human rights abuses within three months.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has found that [Greece](#) violated article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of Tsokas and others which concerned their detention conditions in the prison in Tripoli. Tsokas and five other prisoners said that while the capacity of the cells was 65, there were 177 prisoners held in January 2009, increasing to 185 in June 2012 and to 215 a few months later. There were only nine showers in the yard, the heating came from six oil stoves that could not operate simultaneously, there was no air conditioning or ventilation in summer, the toilets were in a very bad

condition and the food was of low quality. The court ordered the Greek authorities to pay €133,000 compensation to the prisoners.

The ECtHR is also preparing a new pilot-judgment procedure, the third in a row, against [Bulgaria](#) over poor prison conditions. Six complaints by five prisoners have been united into one trial, Neshkov et al, which indicates that the court intends to review the matter of poor prison conditions in the country as a systemic problem. A spokesman from the Bulgarian Helsinki Association welcomed the news, noting that Bulgaria was unlikely to resolve the problems in the country's prisons without external pressure. He emphasised that the problems had been discussed for 15 years and their existence was universally acknowledged but the state appeared incapable of taking any concrete steps to address them.

The recent ruling of the ECtHR which found that lack of space per prisoner in [Estonia's](#) Tallinn prison amounts to inhuman treatment has triggered similar claims from a number of other prisoners. Eleven prisoners have now sued the state saying that the amount of space per prisoner is below the statutory minimum. The Court ruled at the end of last year that the 2.55 square metres of cell floor area per prisoner at the prison is inhuman and that it should be at least 3 square metres.

The [US](#) Attorney General has called for an end to the excessive use of solitary confinement for youth that suffer from mental illness, saying the practice can have lasting, substantial effects on young people that could result in self-harm or, in some cases, even suicide. He noted that "there may be times when it becomes necessary to remove a detained juvenile from others in order to protect staff, other inmates, or the juvenile himself from harm. However, this action should be taken only in a limited way where there is a valid reason to do so, and for a limited amount of time; isolated juveniles must be closely monitored, and every attempt must be made to continue educational and mental health programming while the youth is in isolation."

Also in the [US](#), the state of California failed to follow its own rules for obtaining consent from female prisoners who were sterilised by having their fallopian tubes tied, according to a report by the State Auditor. The report shows that of 144 tubal ligations performed between 2005 and 2011, errors were made in obtaining informed consent in 39 cases. In 27 of those cases, a physician failed to sign the consent form as required and in 18 cases there were potential violations of a mandated waiting period after women gave consent.

[Tanzanian](#) Members of Parliament have criticised the Minister for Home Affairs over the poor and still deteriorating conditions in the country's prisons. The MPs said prisoners face years of confinement in cramped and dirty quarters and get insufficient food rations, noting that there was a lack of space for prisoners to sleep or sit and that such conditions led to the transmission of diseases. The Minister said the government is committed to addressing the problems in the prisons by working to reduce overcrowding and improve the infrastructure. Other issues to be addressed are corporal and capital punishment, corruption, extended pre-trial detention, gang culture and the needs of women and young people.

The rights of [Zimbabwean](#) prisoners are grossly violated due to tough economic conditions and provisions of the past constitution, according to testimony given by the Deputy Prisons

Services Commissioner General to the Thematic Committee for Human Rights. He said there was an acute shortage of clothing and bedding facilities, and inadequate food, water and shelter in the country's prisons. He also noted that the failure by the prisons to transport prisoners on remand to court due to a shortage of transport and fuel deprived suspects of their right to prompt justice.

The [Ugandan](#) Auditor General has called for an end to the bucket system used as a toilet facility in most prisons in the country. He raised concerns that only 28 of the country's prisons have proper toilets, a situation he describes as unhygienic and degrading. A spokesman for the Prisons Service attributed the problem to inadequate funding.

A women's coalition in [South Sudan](#)'s Eastern Equatoria state has expressed concerns over deteriorating sanitary conditions in the state prison in Torit. A representative of the coalition said they were particularly alarmed by the sewage system inside the prison, which serves both male and female prisoners. She said the sewage system was at capacity and needed to be drained immediately as it was polluting the prisoners' accommodation and causing a bad odour, making it difficult for them to sleep. A prison officer said authorities struggled to address sanitation conditions at the prison as they only received limited funding from the state government.

Offensive name-calling can be a "common experience" for Travellers in [Irish](#) prisons, both from other prisoners and from some prison officers, according to a new report by the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT). A small number of Travellers said they had been subjected to "systematic discrimination," including the dispersal of Travellers to other jails following a conflict between them and settled prisoners in one prison. The report also found that male Travellers were between five and 11 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Travellers, with the figure rising for women Travellers who were between 18 and 22 times more likely to be imprisoned than women in general. The IPRT called on the Prison Service to develop an equality policy for all minorities in prison.

Investigations have been launched against the police officers who carried out a humiliating frisk search on youths detained in a prison in [Argentina](#)'s San Luis province. A local news website published the photos of the 2013 search, which show youths completely naked, kneeling with their heads on the floor whilst being searched by guards with dogs. The head of the provincial penitentiary service acknowledged this kind of action "needs to be corrected" and said he had launched investigations against all the officers involved.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has published its reports on a recent visit to [Lithuania](#) in which it criticises poor detention conditions, the excessive use of force in prisons, overcrowding and the segregation of life sentenced prisoners. The report notes that the delegation received a number of consistent allegations of deliberate physical ill-treatment and excessive use of force (consisting mostly of punches, kicks and truncheon blows) in two prisons, and found a high level of inter-prisoner violence at one prison which it partly attributed to the low number of prison staff on duty. The report also found poor material conditions of detention and serious overcrowding in most of the establishments visited.

In a test case for new torture laws, prisoners who were serving time at St Albans Maximum Security Prison near Port Elizabeth, [South Africa](#), have told a court of routine mistreatment by prison officials. The department of prisons is being sued by the prisoners for almost \$100,000 for abuses alleged to have occurred in 2005. The mistreatment is alleged to have started after the prisoners were suspected of killing a senior official. Some of the 231 prisoners bringing the case claim to have been forced by guards to strip naked and lie on the floor in a human chain, with their noses touching the anus of the prisoner in front. They also claim to have been severely beaten and given electric shocks.

The government has taken seriously the findings of a report by the Human Rights Commission of [Zambia](#) (HRC) that highlighted the existence of rampant torture of prisoners in the country's prisons, according to the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs. The HRC report said that prisoners were routinely beaten and denied access to basic human rights such as medical treatment by prison authorities. There was also serious congestion in most prisons which deprived prisoners of privacy and made them susceptible to violence from other prisoners. The Minister said the government had already begun taking some remedial measures to improve living conditions and that new prisons were being constructed to alleviate overcrowding. He also said prison warders were being closely monitored to ensure they did not inflict physical harm on the prisoners.

Tackling overcrowding at [Bahrain](#)'s main prison, providing proper medical care for prisoners and stopping illicit drugs from being smuggled into prisons were among nine recommendations made by the Interior Ministry's Ombudsman Office in its first annual report. The report also recommended that the number of doctors, nurses and medical support staff in the prisons should be increased, and efforts should be made to provide training for all prison and other Interior Ministry staff.

Prison violence

Police firing assault rifles stormed a provincial prison in the [Philippines](#) to pacify rioting prisoners, killing four and injuring 15 others, according to authorities. Around 100 prisoners were involved in the riot, which was triggered by prison officials' plans to transfer the leader of a prison gang to another cell block. A police spokesman said that instead of heeding police warnings the prisoners threw stones and shot at them, leaving the police with no choice but to retaliate.

Five youths, all aged under 18, were killed in a fight in El Carmen jail in San Pedro Sula, [Honduras](#). Police say armed members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang threatened the guards and forced their way at gunpoint into the area where M18 gang members are held. They then opened fire killing five and injuring one. Last year the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights accused Honduras of giving up on rehabilitating prisoners and leaving prisons to be run by the prisoners.

Three people died and several others were injured in a riot at Uribana prison in western [Venezuela](#). Three guards were overpowered by prisoners who had a grenade. The grenade was then detonated, killing the guards and injuring seven other prison staff. Uribana is one

of the 'three most violent jails' in the country according to the Venezuelan Prison Observatory.

Prisoners at a maximum security jail in north-eastern [Brazil](#) held 122 people hostage for 25 hours before releasing them. The situation began when prisoners in one of the wings managed to make a hole in the wall. They then went to the visiting room where they took prisoners' families and four guards hostage. The prisoners were demanding a transfer to prisons with better treatment and more flexible visiting hours. Reports suggest the authorities agreed to some of the prisoners' demands and 16 prisoners were transferred to other prisons.

At least six people – three guards and three prisoners - were killed when hundreds of prisoners broke out of a prison in eastern [Democratic Republic of Congo](#). Prisoners killed two guards and stole their weapons. 301 of the prisons 1,500 prisoners escaped but around 40 were recaptured. Congo's prisons are notoriously overcrowded and mismanaged, and escapes are common.

Several [US](#) states are refusing to comply with a federal law designed to reduce sexual assaults in prison, with governors criticising the decade-old law as counterproductive and too expensive to implement. The governors of Idaho, Texas, Indiana, Utah and Arizona have informed U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder that they won't try to meet the standards required under the Prison Rape Elimination Act. Governors were required to certify by May 15 that their states either met the standards designed to curb widespread sexual abuse behind bars, or to promise that they were actively working toward that goal.

Developments in rehabilitation

The Regional Committee of Calabria, [Italy](#), has approved a bill that will reward prisoners for reading books by reducing their time in prison. Under the proposal, prisoners will see their sentences reduced by three days for each book they read, with the maximum set at 48 days over a one year period – the equivalent of 16 books in twelve months. The offer would only apply to prisoners serving a sentence of more than six months, and the prisoners' progress would be monitored by prison educators to prevent cheating. The bill will now need to be approved by the Regional Council before being debated in parliament.

More than 900 prisoners in Siem Reap, [Cambodia](#) can now spend at least two hours a day reading books in a library funded by a French NGO which has been inaugurated inside the provincial prison. The library contains more than 3,000 books focusing on life skills such as agriculture, electronics and sewing, and on various business sectors. The coordinator of the Prison Library Project said that libraries will be opened in all of the country's prisons.

In [India](#), the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has established 94 Special Study Centres in prisons across the country since 1994. So far 25,000 prisoners have benefitted from the initiative. In 2010 IGNOU announced its 'Free Education for Prisoners' initiative and waived fees for all prisoners who wished to pursue the University's programmes. The move has been a significant milestone in encouraging and rehabilitating prisoners in order to improve their quality of life on release from prison.

Prisoners in [Saudi Arabia](#) will be given training in handicrafts to enable them to secure a decent living on release. The National Program for Handicraft, a flagship programme of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Prisons General Department and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation to train prisoners in how to produce handicrafts. The MoU seeks to incorporate handicrafts training programs in the Kingdom's prisons, in addition to developing prisoners' skills to enable them to train their colleagues. The MoU also stipulates that the three parties cooperating on the initiative will undertake the responsibility of marketing the prisoners' products. The agreement aims to secure job opportunities for prisoners who complete the training and reward them with cash prizes on their release.

The goal to complete the Rehabilitation Programme at Her Majesty's Prison in the [British Virgin Islands](#) is on track, according to the Education and Culture Minister. Many classes are already underway, including computer and keyboarding lessons, anger management and behavioural management. Two prisoners are learning how to blow glass. The Minister added that the Public Works Department, Rite Way Supermarket, and Green VI are undertaking work programmes with some of the prisoners to have them undertake activities such as sewing, making jewellery to sell, and recycling boxes for the products they mail.

Eleven prisoners at the minimum-security Tung Tau Correctional Institution in Stanley, [Hong Kong](#), recently passed the written taxi driver's licence test. They were among 13 prisoners who took the Correctional Services Department's new taxi driver training course, during which they attended classes for 48 days before taking the test. The course enables the prisoners to obtain licences on release. In addition, 15 of the 16 prisoners who took a 100 day travel agent assistant course also passed the test. The course taught skills such as customer service and how to operate travel agency computer programmes. The courses are part of the department's voluntary vocational training programme, which offers more than 30 courses at 13 prisons in trades that are in high demand. It aims to help inmates find careers and reintegrate into society when they are released.

Officials at Her Majesty's Prisons in the [Bahamas](#) will further expand the facility's Inmate Industries Program to focus on the production of 'tourist-related souvenir products' as a means of promoting self-employment among prisoners upon their release. The National Security Minister made the announcement during a Prison Arts and Crafts Show which showcased products made by prisoners including designer bags made from local straw, artwork, paintings, carvings and ceramic pieces. The Minister said "It is hoped that through the educational and vocational training in prison, the seed of self-reform at the bottom of each inmate's heart, can be awakened and in the future, grow to an enormous tree that displays his gifts and talents in all of their splendour."

A number of initiatives have been launched at India's Tihar Jail, the largest prison complex in South Asia. Two FM [radio stations](#) have been set up aimed at helping prisoners engage in positive activities, with prisoners also being trained as radio presenters, and a [fashion line](#) is being established in collaboration with designer Rina Dhaka who will be training prisoners to create designer menswear which will be sold from special kiosks in a Delhi mall. Tihar

prisoners with proven good conduct and qualifications will soon be working in “non-sensitive” positions at the [Indian Bank](#) branch at the prison. According to a spokesman, prisoners at the Semi-Open Prison who are mentally and physically fit will be offered jobs such as security guards and computer operators. Finally, a special campus [job placement](#) drive is being held for women prisoners at the jail. Since 2010 more than 400 male prisoners at Tihar have been successfully placed and have received help in getting a job on release, but the number has been very small for women.

A new training kitchen and restaurant has been set up within [Singapore’s](#) Changi Prison Complex to enhance the training being offered to prisoners so that they are better prepared for careers in the food and beverage or hospitality industries on release. Hope Cafe is a joint initiative by the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), the Workforce Development Agency and the Singapore Prison Service. Prisoners who are assessed to be suitable will undergo training under the Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) framework. The cafe then provides a setting for them to gain hands-on experience. More than 150 prisoners have been trained at the cafe since its inception in November last year and another 204 will be trained by the end of this year.

Some prisoners in [Malaysia](#) may be able to check in and out of prison on a daily basis, if a day parole plan is approved. The prisons department parole and community services division director said the proposal to implement the plan would allow the prisoners to be rehabilitated outside prison by working and interacting with the public. He said the study on the proposal would cover all aspects, including officers to oversee the parolees and companies which will hire them. If the proposal is accepted it will lead to changes in the law.

A significant number of prisoners in [Bangladesh](#) re-engage in criminal activities after they are released due to a lack of proper rehabilitation facilities and failure to reintegrate into society, according to the Inspector General of Prisons. He made the comments at the inaugural ceremony of a two day workshop which aims to develop the skills of prisoners so they can make a living and reintegrate into society.

The [Israeli](#) Prisons Service has fallen short of putting in place the conditions needed to rehabilitate prisoners into society after their release, according to a report by the state comptroller. Around 7,300 prisoners in the country are released on parole each year, and of these only a quarter have any kind of post-imprisonment transition or rehabilitation in place. In 2009 the prison service launched a multi-year programme to improve the rehabilitation of prisoners, but the report found that it failed on all four main parameters: treating addiction, counselling sex offenders, education and opening rehabilitation branches within the prisons.

Sentencing and the law

The [United Arab Emirates](#) has moved to relax its laws on debt defaulting, with the Federal National Council approving a new law that would see sick, old and pregnant people avoid jail. Under the bill, which requires final endorsement into law by the President, less severe punishments would apply to people aged over 70, minors below 18 years of age, terminally ill patients with an incurable or irreversible illness and pregnant women until they give birth

and the baby is one year old. The draft law also says a defaulter would no longer risk a jail term if he or she has a child younger than 15 years or his or her spouse was dead or jailed for any reason.

[Suriname](#), which has announced plans to remove the death penalty from the Criminal Code, has said it will increase the maximum prison term for life sentences from 20 to 30 years. The Justice and Police Minister said in addition the government is also moving to increase the jail term for those convicted of lesser offences from 15 to 20 years.

The Justice and Public Order Minister has said that [Cyprus](#) intends to review the current legislative framework dealing with young offenders with a view to modernising it. He said authorities are putting into practice innovative measures which will place an emphasis on resolving social disputes by avoiding by and large the criminal justice process and concentrating on mediation. He said the goal is to educate young offenders, and to limit the use of custody as far as possible.

A pre-legislative hearing has been held in the [Sierra Leone](#) Parliament to discuss the Correctional Services Bill, which aims to modernise the service. The Minister of Internal Affairs explained to MPs that the drafting of the Bill came as a result of the fact that there has been no proper control over prisons, no human resource capacity, delays in court processes resulting in overcrowding, poor management of prisons records, no separation of remand and convicted prisoners, among other anomalies, which his ministry had viewed as serious concerns. The Bill includes the establishment of a Correctional Council which will make recommendations to the President. Additional clauses state that juveniles should not be held in the Correctional Centers, that prisoners have the right to petition the Council and that the public should be involved in matters concerning the Centers.

The European Court of Human Rights has called on [Hungary](#) to reform its system for reviewing whole life sentences, after ruling in favour of a prisoner's human rights protest against his sentence. The Court was not persuaded that Hungarian law allowed life sentenced prisoners to know what they had to do to be considered for release and under what conditions. Moreover, the law did not guarantee a proper consideration of the changes in the lives of prisoners and their progress towards rehabilitation. The Court held that this case disclosed a systemic problem which could give rise to similar applications. Therefore, for the proper implementation of this judgment, Hungary would be required to put in place a reform of the system of review of whole life sentences to guarantee the examination in every case of whether continued detention is justified on legitimate grounds and to enable whole life prisoners to understand what they must do to be considered for release and under what conditions.

Prisoners in [Ireland](#) who have been sentenced to a prison term of one month or less will now qualify for early release for the first time. A court challenge to existing prison rules has meant that short-term prisoners can now avail themselves of the standard remissions of one quarter of their sentence. Existing procedures had meant that the standard early release rules did not apply to those given jail terms of less than one month, but a woman serving a sentence of one month in prison recently succeeded in a court challenge to the ban on early releases for short-sentence prisoners. The existing rules had caused an unfair

situation to emerge in which a person sentenced to five weeks in prison would be released sooner than a person sentenced to four weeks. The Justice Minister has now formally removed the official ban on remission for short sentences.

At the other end of the scale, prisoners on a life sentence in [Ireland](#) are spending on average 18 years in prison – longer than ever before, according to research conducted by the Irish Prison Service. The research shows that the average prison term for lifers released between 2005 and 2013 was 18 years. This compares with: just over 7.5 years for releases from 1975 to 1984; less than 12 years for those freed between 1985 and 1994; just under 14 years for lifers released between 1995 and 2004. The figure increased to 17.5 years between 2005 and 2010, the previous time the research was done. It has risen a further half a year between 2010 and 2013.

[Jamaica](#) is to decriminalise the possession of small amounts of marijuana, known on the Caribbean island as ganja. The Cabinet has approved changes to the law relating to possession of small quantities of ganja for personal use, the smoking of ganja in private places and the use of ganja for medical-medicinal purposes. According to the Justice Minister, possession of small quantities of the drug would become a non-arrestable, infraction resulting only in a fine.

Prison policy

The [Peruvian](#) Congress has passed a bill that extends the functions of the Ombudsman to meet the country's requirements under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) to establish a National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (NPM). The functions of the NPM are to regularly examine the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty with a view to strengthening their protection; making recommendations to the relevant authorities to improve their treatment, and promoting training on the prevention of torture, among others.

Prisoners at Maafushi Island Prison in the [Maldives](#) are to be categorised into four groups according to security risk, with those considered the least dangerous to be electronically tagged and released on work and study programmes, according to the Home Minister. In addition, older prisoners and those nearing the end of their sentence will be housed in an open jail on a separate island. The Minister said that the reforms will reduce the prison population from around 1,000 to 300 or 400 prisoners.

Although it is rarely used, the [Canadian](#) prison programme in which imprisoned mothers of young children are given special rooms is set for a major expansion. As it adds 114 beds to minimum security prisons in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia, the Correctional Service of Canada will also add 15 new rooms adjacent to the main prison areas, set aside for mothers and their children, according to a spokeswoman. Currently only two women take part in the programme, part time, and since 2008 only 14 children have participated at the federal level. The Correctional Investigator has raised concerns about the very low participation rate.

The rising number of sexual harassment cases in [Danish](#) prisons has prompted the Justice Ministry to look into whether there is a need for women-only prisons. A new report from the state prison service Kriminalforsorgen has revealed that every fourth female prisoner has endured sexual harassment and the justice minister wants to look into whether a women's prison is a possible solution. The minister was positively inclined towards a women's prison, but added that it could have pitfalls such as having to serve time far away from home and family. Denmark hasn't had a prison for women since 2000 when the prison in Amstrup, Jutland closed.

The [Zambian](#) government has said it will recruit more female prison warders to ensure that female prisoners and their children are well looked after. The Home Affairs Minister made the announcement in response to calls by Age Justice International to improve the treatment of female prisoners to meet international standards. The organisation noted that women were arrested and guarded by male officers even when they wanted to go to the lavatory.

The [Kenyan](#) Prisons Service is facing a severe staff shortage as no new staff have been recruited since 2010. An insider estimated that about 6,000 prison officers are due to retire from July. Lack of funds has been cited as the main reason delaying the employment of new staff, and the Commissioner General of Prisons has pleaded for funds to recruit new officers.

A further 700 jobs are being lost in the [Netherlands](#) prison service, according to a briefing by the junior justice minister. Some 2,000 jobs have already gone since the government announced cuts of €340 million to the prison system budget. The minister told parliament that Dutch prisons are becoming increasingly empty. The new round of cuts would not see the closure of more prisons but creative activities will be cancelled, sports periods will be limited and libraries will be digitalised.

The [US](#) state of Ohio has agreed to phase out the use of solitary confinement as a punishment for juveniles. The US Department of Justice and private plaintiffs had sued the state over what they said were violations of the juveniles' constitutional rights. The Justice Department sought to end what it claimed was excessive and harmful use of seclusion of mentally ill youths. But the settlement goes further, with the state agreeing to phase out solitary confinement as a punishment for any children in prison. The plan also calls for more mental health services, since mental illness is often a factor in the behaviour problems that land young people in solitary, and seclusion often worsens their condition. The Department of Justice found children in Ohio's prisons in 2013 spent almost 60,000 hours in solitary confinement, with some spending as much as 40 percent of their time secluded.

The union representing [Canada's](#) prison guards is urging its 7,500 members to vote ABC – Anything but Conservative – in the next election. The union's complaints stem from what it claims are increasingly dangerous working conditions in the prisons, caused by overcrowding and double bunking as a result of the current Conservative government's "tough on crime" policies.

Prison authorities in Abu Dhabi, [UAE](#), are planning a revolutionary new prison in which prisoners could serve their whole sentences without seeing a prison guard. The manager of

Abu Dhabi's punishment and corrections department said the new jail would be a progressive, secure correctional facility in which prisoners would not encounter armed guards, but would deal primarily with social workers, as well as with trainers, psychologists, counsellors and medical staff. Security guards would be available 'behind the scenes' and asked only to intervene when necessary. The new prison will be the largest in the emirate, with capacity for 5,500 prisoners.

[Luxembourg](#) MPs have approved plans for the construction of a new prison in the south west of the country, bringing the number of prisons to three. The prison will allow the separation of convicted prisoners from those awaiting trial, which has not been possible until now and is an issue for which the government has been heavily criticised by human rights organisations. Two MPs voted against the new prison, arguing that rather than increase its capacity the government should completely review the country's prison system.

A prison precinct housing thousands of prisoners on the outskirts of Perth, Western [Australia](#), is a step closer, with the state government confirming a business case is being developed. The proposal would see several prisons – ranging from minimum to maximum security – co-located on a site which would also include health, court, training and rehabilitation facilities. Its cost, site and location are yet to be determined, but a decision on whether to progress the proposal further is likely within six months. In Victoria, [Australia](#), a super maximum security unit is to be constructed outside the perimeter wall of the high security Barwon prison. A bigger and more secure perimeter wall will then be built around it, to completely isolate it from the main prison. The 40-bed unit will be the most secure prison unit in the state and will be used to isolate the prisoners considered the most dangerous.

Cellmates in some [Russian](#) prisons will be matched up on the basis of their psychological compatibility as part of a pilot project announced by the Federal Penal Service. The project will be implemented in the regions of Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, Komi and Bashkortostan, and will affect a range of different prison facilities, including a women's prison and a maximum-security colony. The initiative is expected to prevent the "strong" prisoners from bullying the "weak" ones according to the first deputy director of the Federal Penal Service. It was not immediately clear how psychological compatibility would be determined for purposes of the pilot project.

A group of prisoners at Berlin Tegel jail in [Germany](#) have formed a union in an attempt to campaign for the introduction of a minimum wage and a pension scheme for prisoners. Prisoners are excluded from national pension schemes and the national minimum wage, which in Germany's case is planned to come into effect in 2015 at €8.50 (£6.90) an hour. Prisoners at Berlin Tegel earn between €9 and €15 per day, depending on their qualifications. The Berlin union, which is registered as an association without legal status and claims to have collected numerous signatures within the prison, criticised the exclusion of prisoners from minimum wage plans. It said the lack of pension schemes meant that many elderly inmates were released straight into poverty.

