



# International Centre for Prison Studies

## ICPS NEWS DIGEST

### 12<sup>th</sup> Edition – November - December 2012

Welcome to the twelfth 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 November to 31 December 2012. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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#### **Prison populations**

The Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has highlighted “persistent overcrowding and staffing problems” in their new report on [Belgium](#), which urges the country to rethink its prison policy. The report noted that up to 750 prisoners were being held at the Forest prison despite its official capacity of 405 places. Some prisoners had only buckets for toilets, emptied twice a day, while others slept on mattresses on the floor. The report states that in prisons near Brussels prisoners complained about the food they received, alleged racist insults from prison staff and poor detention conditions. The report also expressed concern at the lack of prison guards, revealing that in one section two guards were responsible for some 100 prisoners.

The CPT has also published the report on its visits to prisons in the [Bulgarian](#) cities of Varna and Burgas. The delegation found disturbing levels of overcrowding in all sections of the two prisons visited, with 560 prisoners being held in the closed section of Varna prison which has capacity for 350, while the number of prisoners in the closed section of Burgas prison was 940 against official capacity of 371. The delegation found that prisoners in Burgas prison had less than 1m<sup>2</sup> of living space per person in the dormitories.

The annual report of the Antigone Association states that [Italy](#)'s prisons are still far more overcrowded than the average for European countries despite reforms passed to relieve pressure on the prison population. The country's prisons are at 142.5 percent capacity against a European average of 99.6 percent. The report also found that the number of foreign prisoners outnumber Italians in most northern Italian prisons.

The Acting Prison Superintendent in [Antigua](#) has told the High Court that 361 prisoners are being held in the country's prison which was built to hold 150. The country's Governor General says the government recognises the issue and has pledged "to have a new prison plant built."

The Jaleswor Prison in Mahottari, [Nepal](#), has capacity for 135 prisoners but is currently holding 406, including 43 women and seven dependent children. The prison lacks sufficient space for the prisoners to sleep, and only has two taps and four toilets so prisoners must wait for hours to use them.

A report on [Madagascar](#) states that the country's 83 prisons and detention centres were designed for 10,319 prisoners, but house 19,870. Food shortages mean that as many as two-thirds of the prisoners suffer from chronic malnutrition, there isn't enough water for all the prisoners and hygiene is a major problem.

Cartagena prison in [Colombia](#) is housing 2,160 prisoners in conditions designed for 1,000, with only 20 prison staff to guard them. The gravity of the situation was made clear when a riot in the prison left one prisoner dead and three more wounded. Authorities from the city of Cartagena will form a special committee to request help from the government to resolve the issue of the gross overcrowding.

The [Bangladeshi](#) Home Minister has confirmed that there are 64,255 people held in the country's prisons, which have capacity for 33,436. All but four of the 68 prisons are overcrowded, with Dhaka Central Jail holding three times more prisoners than it was designed for.

The rise in prisoner numbers in the state of Victoria, [Australia](#), is reaching unsustainable levels according to a report by the Auditor-General on prison capacity planning. The report said the state's prisoner population had grown by 38 percent in the past decade, and the number of male prisoners is expected to rise by over 40 percent by 2016. The report claims the large growth in prison numbers and overcrowding has coincided with an almost doubling in the rate of serious incidents such as assaults, self-harm and suicide attempts.

In the [US](#), 26 state departments of corrections reported decreases in their prison populations during 2011, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. California reported the largest decline (down 15,493) while New Jersey, New York, Michigan, Florida and Texas each had population decreases of more than 1,000 prisoners. Among states that had increases in their prison populations, Tennessee and Kentucky both added more than 1,000 prisoners. During 2011 the total US prison population declined for the second consecutive year, to under 1.6 million prisoners, 15,023 fewer than in 2010.

Justice Ministry figures in the [Netherlands](#) show that the country's prison population continues to fall, from an average of 14,108 in 2005 to just over 11,000 in 2009. The Ministry estimates that by 2015 the average prison population will be 8,875, and is considering closing 11 prisons in order to concentrate the prison population in the central urban belt of Randstad, Overijssel and Noord-Brabant provinces, which it anticipates will be cheaper and more efficient.

The number of women in prison in [Azerbaijan](#) has fallen from 450 in 2011 to 300 in 2012, according to the deputy chief of the country's Penitentiary Service who noted that most of the women were in prison for fraud, trading drugs and trafficking. The number of teenage prisoners is also falling, with 26 currently being held in prison. The Penitentiary Service has recently been undertaking reform of the system, and claims the conditions in which prisoners are held are improving and each prisoner is now able to call their family.

Figures published by the [Australian](#) Bureau of Statistics show that the number of women in the country's prisons increased by 8.4 percent in the 12 months to December 2012, and by 48 percent since 2002. This compares to a 0.4 percent increase in the number of men in prison over the previous 12 months and a 29 percent increase in the past decade. Women now make up seven percent of Australia's total prison population.

The number of prisoners serving life sentences in [South Africa](#) has increased by almost 2,400 percent since 1995, according to the National Council of Corrective Services who said in 1995 there were 433 prisoners serving life sentences compared to 10,314 in 2012. The Council said this increase created problems on how these prisoners would be dealt with and added to the problem of overcrowding.

The number of prisoners on death row in [Japan](#) is at its highest since 1949, with 133 prisoners awaiting execution at the end of 2012. In [India](#) 477 prisoners are awaiting execution.

In [Georgia](#) a draft amnesty bill has been passed at its first reading in Parliament. The draft envisages several forms of amnesty for prisoners such as a complete exemption from punishment, halving of a prison sentence or reduction of sentence by one-third or one-quarter for a broad range of crime categories. According to tentative figures from the Ministry of Penitentiary, as a result of the proposed amnesty up to 3,000 prisoners will be released, with approximately a further 5,500 becoming eligible to apply to have their sentences reduced. The bill will now be analysed article by article at its second reading.

The [Tanzanian](#) President has pardoned 3,814 prisoners on the occasion of the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of independence. Those pardoned include prisoners serving sentences not exceeding five years and who had served at least a quarter of their sentence; those suffering from life-threatening illnesses if approved by a panel of medical experts; those aged over 70; pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as those with physical and mental disability.

The President of [Kenya](#) has released 6,700 prisoners in a move aimed at easing congestion in the country's prisons. Among those released are first time prisoners serving nine months or less and those convicted of minor offences serving six months or less and of good

conduct. Kenya's prison population is around 49,000, more than double its official capacity of 22,000.

The [Bolivian](#) Minister for Prisons says as many as 1,600 prisoners could be released under an amnesty decree issued by the President. Under the decree those eligible for release include disabled prisoners, men over the age of 58 and women over the age of 55. They must have served at least a third of their sentences. The decree aims to reduce the number of prisoners in the country's overcrowded prisons which have capacity for 7,000 but are holding nearly 13,000 prisoners.

[Colombia](#) is seeking to address the issue of overcrowding by building six new prisons by 2015. The prisons would hold 4,500 prisoners each. Two new prisons, each with capacity for 10,000 prisoners, are being proposed in [Iran](#), while the [Jamaican](#) government is seeking private sector support to build a 5,000 place prison to ease the overcrowding in the system. A new prison has opened in [Norway](#) that will house foreign male prisoners due to be deported after serving their sentences. The prison already has prisoners from 20 different countries and its training programmes will concentrate on English, building trades, technology and basic lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic.

## Health

The [South African](#) Constitutional Court has ruled in favour of Dudley Lee, a former prisoner who contracted TB while being held in an overcrowded cell in Pollsmoor prison for four and a half years while awaiting trial. In what is being hailed as a landmark ruling on the way that prisoners are treated by the state, the court ordered the Minister of Correctional Services to pay all his legal costs, and the case will now return to the Western Cape High Court which will decide what damages are due to Mr Lee.

A [US](#) federal judge has ruled that Alabama's segregation of prisoners with HIV violates the Americans with Disabilities Act. The judge wrote in his ruling "It is evident that, while the... segregation policy has been an unnecessary tool for preventing the transmission of HIV, it has been an effective one for humiliating and isolating prisoners living with the disease." South Carolina now remains the only state which still segregates prisoners with HIV from the general prison population.

Also in the [US](#), officials at the highest security federal prison, the Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, have taken steps to address mental health issues among prisoners following a lawsuit that accuses the government of indifference. The lawsuit claims that prison officials transfer mentally ill prisoners to the Supermax and then stop treating their illnesses, including taking them off medication. At least six prisoners have killed themselves inside the prison, according to the suit, and many others have attempted suicide or mutilated themselves.

The [Zambian](#) High Court has begun hearing evidence in a case challenging the poor prison conditions and lack of adequate food provided to prisoners with HIV in Lusaka Central Prison. The prisoner bringing the case testified that he faces difficulties in receiving his anti-retroviral treatment due to a shortage of staff available to escort him to a clinic, and also

that he does not receive adequate food in terms of quality or quantity. He also stated that the cells in the prison are unsanitary and poorly ventilated and can lead to the spread of diseases such as TB. The case has been adjourned until March 2013.

A confidential report to the government of the state of Victoria, [Australia](#), obtained by a television programme, raises concerns about the impact of solitary confinement on mental health. The report particularly criticises the Charlotte Unit of Port Philip Prison where up to six young people have been held, spending at least 22 hours a day locked in a cell and handcuffed in the exercise yard for the other two hours. The report says prisoners held in such conditions can have few normal interpersonal interactions or conversations, and lack physical and mental stimulation which can negatively impact on their mental health.

A report published in the [Canadian](#) Medical Association Journal raises concerns that overcrowded conditions fuelled by new federal laws that impose longer, stricter sentences will lead to more mental and physical health conditions. The report says that overcrowding will lead to prisoners spending longer in custody and being more isolated, potential restriction on family visits that can have a devastating effect on the mental and emotional state of prisoners, and exposure to diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C whose rates are dramatically higher in prison. The authors also raise concerns that stretched resources could hamper the ability of physicians to deliver proper care.

A new High Dependency Unit has opened at Rimutaka Prison, the first of its kind in [New Zealand](#). The new 20 bed unit, which will be operated by Corrections officers and health services staff, will cater for prisoners who can no longer look after themselves and who have high health needs. It will cater mostly for older men, some of whom have dementia, and for younger prisoners with significant health conditions such as physical disabilities, motor neurone disease or multiple sclerosis.

## **Treatment of prisoners**

[France](#)'s Director of Prisons has been given ten days to come up with a detailed programme to rid the Les Baumettes prison in Marseilles of rats and insects, after a recent report described shocking conditions there. The country's highest court has ordered the move, also demanding that all cells have adequate natural or artificial lighting and that rubbish accumulating in communal areas be removed.

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has reported that conditions of detention in the [Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#) lacked improvement, and that little or no progress has been made in implementing many key recommendations made by the Committee after its previous visit in 2006. The report was particularly critical of the situation in Idrizova prison where conditions in some units were described as 'deplorable' and appalling', while the hygiene in parts of the prison was described as 'poor'.

The [Brazilian](#) Justice Minister has caused controversy by describing the country's prison system as 'medieval' and declaring that he would rather die than pass a long period in a Brazilian prison. Brazil's prisons have a capacity of 295,000 but are holding 471,000.

In the [US](#) the warden of a North Carolina prison has been suspended pending the outcome of an investigation into allegations that prisoners were forced to rub hot sauce on their genitals. Six prisoners sent a letter to the US District Court complaining that staff had also forced them to perform humiliating acts for the entertainment of guards, including stripping naked and pretending to have sex. The prisoners asked for the court's assistance in finding lawyers to help them file a lawsuit against the state.

The UN Committee Against Torture has released a report strongly criticising [Russia](#) for failing to investigate widespread allegations of torture. The report raises concerns about the discrepancy between the high number of complaints of torture and ill treatment that it received from prisoners and the relatively low number of criminal cases opened by authorities in response leading to prosecution. The report also expresses serious concern about numerous allegations that prisoners have been tortured to extract confessions which were then used as evidence in court, and at Moscow's failure to ensure all prisoners had the right to a lawyer.

Some prisoners in [Armenia](#) have gone on hunger strike and some have sewn their eyes and mouths shut in order to draw attention to demands for improved living conditions in the country's prisons. Armenia's government says it is prioritising the issue of prison conditions and officials say that a four year strategy will solve the overcrowding problem by 2017. However rights activists are sceptical saying that the country has carried out prison reforms repeatedly since 1991 with few tangible results.

At least 15 prisoners in the central [Georgian](#) town of Ksani have sewn their mouths shut to protest what they say are rights abuses by the prison administration. A rights activist told journalists that the prisoners were demanding that the prison administration be changed, saying that the current administration was too cruel towards them.

The Ministry of Interior in [Afghanistan](#) has put together a delegation tasked with assessing the situation of prisoners in the Pul-i-Charki prison and reporting prisoners' problems to the Ministry. The delegation will examine prisoners' health and living conditions, respect for human rights and progress in the handling of court cases against the prisoners. The Ministry says improving conditions of prisons and prisoners is one of its priorities.

Since it opened in 1998 Monze open air prison in [Zambia](#) has been operating without any electricity, meaning prisoners and staff had to cope with poor lighting, and obsolete heating and cooking facilities. However these challenges will soon be addressed as the prison will be connected to the grid as part of the Mwanza-Kasaka rural electrification project. The Prisons Service Commissioner says that the electrification of the prison will benefit both prisoners and staff because services such as health care provision will be enhanced and the living conditions for staff and prisoners will be improved.

The government of the state of Tamil Nadu, [India](#), has ordered that prisoners be issued with trousers rather than shorts after it was brought to the notice of the prison department that prisoners were ashamed to meet with their relatives while wearing shorts. Only a few prisons in the country allow prisoners to wear trousers and the new initiative is seen as a step forward in prison reforms.

## Prison violence

Prisoners in [Tajikistan](#) are claiming they were severely beaten by guards while being transferred to another prison and have provided video evidence of their injuries to support their allegations. The prisoners exhibited severe bruises on their bodies, claiming they were beaten with rubber batons by some 15 to 20 prison staff. The deputy head of the Prisons Department in the Justice Ministry said “All the allegations about torture are a complete lie and have no basis whatsoever.”

Eight prisoners died and three others were injured at the Central Prison in Ibb, [Yemen](#), after a prisoner caused a fire by setting his clothes and mattress alight. Two hundred prisoners were in the cells at the time, and the eight who died suffocated to death when they were unable to escape.

Seventeen people were killed when prisoners tried to escape from a prison in northern [Mexico](#), firing guns at the guard towers and running through tunnels below the prison. The dead included 11 prisoners and six guards. Officials said the violence broke out as guards tried to stop a “massive prison break.” Five prisoners were killed and four others wounded in a fight at San Pedro Sula prison in [Honduras](#). The fight broke out after the prisoners tried to kill the cellblock coordinator.

Prisoners at the maximum security Fraijanes II prison in [Guatemala](#) took eight prison guards hostage and threatened to kill them if their demands for better food and more family visits were not met. The hostages were [released](#) unharmed the following day and the situation was resolved without the use of force.

Fourteen prisoners were injured during a fight at a prison in [Chile](#) during which prisoners set fire to their mattresses, while two prisoners were killed and three people wounded in a fight at Yanamayo prison in [Peru](#). A riot broke out in Bellavista prison, the largest in [Colombia](#), which left 30 prisoners injured. A spokesman for an organisation of the prisoners’ families said the prison, which has capacity for 2,000 prisoners, is currently holding 5,000, leading to violence and unease among the prisoners.

At least 27 people died in clashes between prisoners and guards at [Sri Lanka](#)’s Welikada prison. The violence started when police commandos arrived at the prison to provide security whilst prison officers searched for illegal items. After some prisoners seized arms a gunfight erupted, and witnesses said guards fired on prisoners who tried to escape. Most of those who died were prisoners.

A survey by the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony, [Germany](#), in which ten percent of the country’s prisoners took part, found that injury, abuse, sexual violence, threats and even murder are common in the country’s prisons. The study reports cases where prisoners claim they were forced to swallow water mixed with salt, shampoo and toothpaste until they vomited, and were then forced to eat the vomit, or drink urine. Other prisoners were raped in dark corridors and beaten by fellow prisoners. A quarter of all the men and women surveyed had experienced some form of violence in the four weeks before

the study. Among younger prisoners that number was half. The report notes that since the survey was carried out measures have been put in place to try and reduce violence in the prisons.

Prisons across [Canada](#) should consider housing multiple murderers in their own cells and allow dangerous prisoners to jump the queue for their own sleeping quarters, a coroner's jury in British Columbia recommended after examining the death of a prisoner who was killed by his serial killer cellmate. The Correctional Service of Canada and the federal public safety ministry say they are reviewing the jury's recommendations.

## **Developments in rehabilitation**

A prison work programme in [Taiwan](#), under which prisoners make products such as lacquerware and foodstuffs such as "champion cakes", egg rolls and pineapple cake, have generated revenues of NT£734 million (US\$25.25 million) in the first ten months of 2012, up 12.9 percent on the previous year. According to the Prison Act, after production costs are subtracted, 50 percent of the remaining operating surplus should go to wages, with 25 percent of those wages devoted to a restitution fund for victims of crime.

The [South African](#) Department of Correctional Services plans to establish a trading entity that would offer products and services ranging from furniture, clothing, steel works, food and many others for sale. This would help prisoners acquire the skills to make them productive members of society upon release, according to the Correctional Services Minister. The products would be sold to the private sector and non-governmental organisations, and some would be donated to poor communities.

Through an initiative in [Kenya](#) sponsored by the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, prisoners and prison staff have been taught how to start up and manage a farm. Fruit and vegetables are grown across 40 acres of open land and in a greenhouse the prisoners built and now manage under supervision. The produce is then cooked and consumed by the prisoners, as well as being sold outside the prison. Seedlings for fruit trees are also sold, encouraging a more cooperative relationship between prisoners and the local community.

Prisoners at Waikeria prison in [New Zealand](#) are being given the opportunity to give back to their communities through a new initiative which sees teams of prisoners picking certified organic tangelos and mandarins in the prison's orchard. The fruit is delivered to schools in the area, and when the schools are closed the fruit will go to charities, food banks, retirement homes, the women's refuge and other local organisations.

In [New Zealand](#), two new drug and alcohol courts have opened with the aim of tackling the underlying causes of crime which, it is hoped, will save lives and money. The courts will deal with about 100 people with alcohol and drug dependency issues in their first year of operation and will take on those who have pleaded guilty, face a term of at least three years in prison and show a willingness to change their ways. They will be put through an intensive programme designed to turn their lives around and, if they are successful, their efforts will be taken into account at sentencing.



A programme in [Malaysia](#) through which prisoners are relocated to halfway houses upon release from prison has been found to be effective, with the Deputy Home Minister noting that 90 percent of participants have obtained employment since the programme's implementation. The houses provide accommodation and other facilities as well as giving the newly released prisoners a safe environment in which to adjust to the local community.

A minimum security prison aimed at breaking the cycle of repeat offending in young men has opened in Western [Australia](#). The Wandoo Reintegration Facility is the first prison in the state dedicated to men aged 18 – 24 and will house 80 prisoners. The prison will offer traineeships with certificates in building maintenance, conservation and land management, horticulture and small business operations. Those released from the prison will be provided with three months of support from Mission Australia, a Christian community service organisation.

Also in Western [Australia](#), prisoners from Bunbury Regional Prison have been working with staff from City of Bunbury parks and gardens department to rejuvenate Boulters Heights, a lookout point in the centre of the city. The prisoners and staff have been clearing, mulching, irrigating and replanting the top section of land. The project aims to make lasting changes that will benefit the community and improve the prisoners' chances of thriving once they are released, and all prisoners who have taken part in the work also have the chance to undertake a Certificate II in Horticulture with the aid of the prison's education team.

A survey carried out by the [Japanese](#) Justice Ministry found that about one third of former prisoners aged 65 or over have been unable to find permanent housing after being released. The Ministry's survey was the first of its kind to examine how former prisoners were reintegrating into society on release from prison.

The Governor General of [Antigua](#) has announced that a Rehabilitation of Offenders Act will be introduced to Parliament in early 2013. Under the Act prisoners' criminal records will be expunged after a period of rehabilitation. The purpose of the Act is to give former prisoners a second chance and to give them a better chance of finding employment.

## **Sentencing and the law**

The [Indonesian](#) government has changed its drug eradication strategy by being more consistent in applying a law which promotes and protects the basic rights of drug users, treating them as victims rather than criminals. The law requires drug addicts and drug users to be sent to rehabilitation centres for medical treatment instead of being sent to prison. Under the new law prison would be strictly reserved for drug traffickers.

[Saudi Arabia](#) is considering introducing a system whereby prisoners would be released from prison by wearing electronic tracking bracelets. The Interior Ministry has formed a committee to study the application of the electronic tracking system which is still in its trial stage. If successful it will be used as an alternative to time in prison.

The [United Arab Emirates](#) Cabinet has approved and ratified prison transfer agreements with Pakistan and India. Pakistani authorities say the first batch of prisoners could be transferred to their home country as early as January 2013, while repatriation of Indian prisoners could take up to nine months. It is estimated that between 1,200 and 1,400 Pakistani prisoners and around 1,200 Indian nationals are being held in UAE prisons. According to the treaty prisoners can volunteer to be transferred but those jailed for drug offences, murder and financial crimes were not eligible.

A draft National Action Plan for Human Rights has been launched in the [Lebanese](#) Parliament and covers a comprehensive raft of legislation, from judicial reform to the rights of women and children. The draft plan includes provisions outlawing torture, bringing forward trials, calling for the replacement of the death penalty with life imprisonment except in the case of the most severe crimes and improving prison conditions.

A report from [Canada](#) suggests that thirteen years after the Supreme Court issued a demand for information that would enable trial judges to pass more culturally sensitive sentences for Aboriginal defendants, its edict has been largely ignored in much of the country. The documents, known as Gladue reports, are considered a vital aid to judges considering the impact on a defendant of the historical mistreatment of Aboriginal communities, amid deep concerns about the over-representation of Aboriginal people in prison. In most regions, lack of funding or a lack of interest has meant that these detailed reports are not prepared.

A senior High Court judge in [Malawi](#) has claimed that the problem of the country's overcrowded prisons is being made worse by the country's magistrates unjustifiably rejecting bail applications. The judge urged magistrates across the country to always consider the presumption of innocence when ruling on bail applications. The Centre for Human Rights, Advice and Assistance says that 75 percent of prisoners in [Malawi](#) were unaware of their right to bail. The NGO is running a Bail Education Project in order to increase awareness of this right for those going through the legal process and to encourage cooperation between the courts, the police and the prison service in reducing the amount of people on remand in prison.

A report by Amnesty International claims that thousands of people are being held in prison in [Mozambique](#) despite not having been found guilty of a crime. The report describes how people from poor social groups are not informed of their rights or they are unable to understand them, cannot afford an attorney and are therefore invariably represented by unqualified or poorly qualified individuals, and are rarely granted freedom whilst awaiting trial.

The [Kenyan](#) Judiciary and Prisons Department have launched a programme to decongest the prisons. The programme will see thousands of prisoners who have been sentenced to one year or less being released and given community service. The two departments will review cases from all correctional facilities in the country. The Judicial Panel announced that courts will also consider sentencing petty offenders to community service instead of prison.

Voters in California, [US](#), have voted to amend the state's "three strikes and you're out" law which mandates a life sentence for anyone convicted of three serious crimes. Proposition 36

passed by 53 percent and will amend the law to make only a violent or serious third felony count as a “third strike.” At least 2,800 prisoners, or about a third of the 8,900 convicted under the current law, could have their sentences reduced.

The [Nigerian](#) Senate has removed hard labour from the Prisons Act, saying it is “an inheritance from the colonial era and should be deleted and replaced with prison labour.” Meanwhile [Jamaica](#) is preparing to abolish a slavery-era law allowing flogging and whipping as a means of punishing prisoners. The punishment has not been used since 2004 but the statutes remain in the island’s penal code and prevent the government from ratifying the UN Convention Against Torture.

[Ukraine](#) has updated its criminal law for the first time in 50 years. The new law introduces bail, jury trials, the concept of house arrest, use of videoconferences during investigation, and settlements between suspects and victims approved by judges, as well as recognising testimony only when it is given in the courtroom, thereby eliminating the widespread practice of police forcing confessions from suspects. The law is also expected to reduce the prison population as it decriminalises many economic crimes, changing the punishment from imprisonment to fines, and it limits the term of pre-trial detention to 12 months for felonies and six months for petty crimes.

The mayor of Amsterdam in the [Netherlands](#) has announced that residents of the city who have a record of harassing their neighbours will be exiled and will live under police supervision in special container housing units with only basic amenities, where they will be motivated to change their behaviour when they return to the city. Authorities in the city have formed a task force to identify the worst offenders behind the 13,000 complaints of anti-social behaviour the city receives annually. Those charged who defy a compulsory six month course in the camps will face eviction and homelessness.

A senate inquiry in [Australia](#) will examine new ways to cut prison costs by investing in communities. The Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will investigate possible gains from reinvesting taxpayers’ dollars from prisons to communities amid expanding imprisonment rates. The inquiry will also examine the higher proportion of indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system compared with wider society.

The [Singapore](#) parliament has passed legal reforms abolishing mandatory death sentences in some drug trafficking and murder cases. Before the reforms judges had no choice but to impose the death penalty on anyone convicted of murder or trafficking in drugs above a specific volume. Judges now have the discretion to impose life imprisonment on a person convicted of murder if that person “is not found to have intended to cause death.” For drug offences courts can impose a life sentence if the accused is found to be “only a drug courier” or “suffering from such an abnormality of mind that it substantially impaired his mental responsibility for committing the offence.”

The exoneration of a Nepalese man who served 15 years in a [Japanese](#) prison for a murder he did not commit has raised questions about the judicial system in a country which retains the death penalty. The man had originally been acquitted by a lower court only for a more senior judge to overturn that decision, and he was then denied repeated requests for a

retrial during his time in prison. It was also discovered that authorities failed to provide his defence with evidence that could have cleared his name at the outset of the case.

A record 111 countries voted for a moratorium on capital punishment at the [UN](#) General Assembly meeting in December, four more than voted in favour in 2010. Although not legally binding it is felt that the vote sends a strong message to the slowly shrinking number of nations that still execute prisoners.

## **Prison policy**

Proposals by the [Nigerian](#) Ministry of Interior to enter into a Public Private Partnership (PPP) for the running of the country's prisons are generating mixed reactions. The Ministry says the proposal is meant to check prison congestion, but prison officers argue that the congestion is the consequence of a malfunctioning judicial system, which is the issue that the ministry should be addressing.

The [Japanese](#) Justice Ministry plans to expand the outsourcing of the management of prisons and detention centres to improve prisoner care and reduce costs, according to sources. Based on discussions with an advisory panel, the Ministry is expected to decide the facilities to be outsourced as early as spring 2013. Since 2007 the ministry has been outsourcing to the private sector a part of the management functions at eight prisons for short term prisoners.

The [Lebanese](#) Justice Minister has announced that he has tasked a senior judge with drafting a system to move the General Directorate of Prisons from the Interior Ministry to the Ministry of Justice.

The operators of a new private prison in Melbourne, [Australia](#), will be rewarded not only for locking up prisoners but also for making sure they don't return. The state government will pay cash bonuses to the operator of Ravenhall prison from 2017 if recidivism can be kept below contract benchmarks.

Prison staff in New South Wales, [Australia](#) will undergo mandatory training programmes to learn better how to manage difficult and unruly prisoners. A new education package, featuring training videos and questionnaires is being developed by Corrective Services following a number of recommendations by the Ombudsman relating to the appropriate use of force. Other changes included strengthening accountability for reporting on and reviewing incidents involving the use of force by filming incidents where force was required.

Staffing levels in [Irish](#) prisons are some 300 below authorised numbers, according to the Minister of Justice. Prison officers and staff involved in education, psychology and healthcare at the country's prisons have all been cut back under strict budgetary changes. A number of work training programmes and classes at prisons have also been curtailed.

The Bihar government in [India](#) plans to record the voices of all prisoners through advanced speech recognition technology. The speech technology is designed to help detect and curb crime by allowing police to match voice samples of suspects with those in the archives. The

government also plans to hold prisoner 'darbars' (assemblies) to address their grievances. District magistrates will hold the sessions every two months.

The [Greek](#) Justice Minister has announced plans for prisoners to be granted supervised use of computers with internet access and private family visits from their spouses and registered partners. Other reforms include a new prison hostel scheme allowing some pre-trial and some convicted prisoners to be released early, only spending nights at the hostels. The reforms are being released for consultation before being submitted to parliament.

The [Tanzanian](#) Ministry of Home Affairs has announced plans to grant conjugal rights to prisoners in a bid to reduce sexual abuse, which is said to have increased in prisons.

In [Zimbabwe](#) a senior justice ministry official has announced that preparations to introduce an open prison system for women, especially those with babies, are at an advanced stage. There are 14,000 prisoners in Zimbabwe, of which about 600 are women.

[China](#) plans to implement a new national donation system which will allow the government to phase out the practice of removing organs from executed prisoners to be used in transplant operations. China's health ministry said that the new system is being developed after officials said using organs from death row prisoners was neither ethical nor sustainable. Also in [China](#), the Supreme People's Court has announced that death row prisoners will be ensured a chance to see their family before being executed.

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