



# International Centre for Prison Studies

## ICPS NEWS DIGEST

### 17<sup>th</sup> Edition – September - October 2013

Welcome to the seventeenth 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 September to 31 October. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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#### **Prison populations**

Severe overcrowding in prisons in [El Salvador](#), where more than 26,500 prisoners are held in conditions designed for around 8,000, means that around 3,000 detainees are being held in police station holding cells. One prisoner being held in such a cell reported that 23 men were sharing a space of nine feet by nine feet, which doesn't have a toilet so faeces is passed out of the cell on a plate for removal. The cells are designed to hold people for up to 72 hours, but there were people who had been in there for five years.

[Bahrain](#)'s main prison is overcrowded and does not have enough beds for prisoners, according to an official report. Details of the inspection at Jaw prison were revealed by the Interior Ministry Ombudsman, a move described by one senior official as "a milestone in transparency." The report found that 1,608 prisoners were being held in the prison, which has capacity for 1,201, that some cells do not have toilets, hygiene standards were poor even in the prison clinic, and there are no CCTV cameras.

[Sri Lanka](#)'s Commissioner General of Prisons has reported that the country's prisons are severely overcrowded. He said that in some instances seven prisoners are being held in cells designed for one, a situation which has caused great anxiety among the prisoners, and health conditions such as skin diseases have increased.

[Italy](#)'s president has urged parliament to ease chronic overcrowding in prisons by pardoning thousands of people convicted of minor crimes, saying "the pressing need to change the conditions of prisons is a legal, political and moral imperative."

The [French](#) government has announced it will extend and reinforce the use of probation by law to ease overcrowding in prisons. The decision comes following recommendations by the Justice Minister who is under pressure to ease the strain on a rundown prisons system that houses over 67,000 prisoners in ageing facilities criticised by human rights groups. The government is also creating 6,500 new prison places and doing away with minimum sentencing guidelines.

In [Armenia](#) an amnesty has been declared on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the country's independence. Six hundred prisoners have been released, with a further 1,000 receiving a reduction in their sentence. Rights activists have [warned](#) that the amnesty has done little to relieve huge overcrowding in the country's prisons, and said a complete overhaul is needed to address longstanding problems.

The [Kenyan](#) government has announced that it will release 12,000 prisoners across the country to reduce congestion in prisons. Prisoners serving sentences of up to three years will be targeted for release. They will be transferred to community service, which the government says will ease their reintegration into society.

The [Bolivian](#) president has signed a pardon decree that would benefit between 1,000 – 2,000 prisoners. The Bolivian congress must still approve the measure. The decree was issued in response to a riot and fire in Palmasola prison in August which killed 35 people, including a small child. Bolivian prisons are massively overcrowded, with very poor conditions and infrastructure. Palmasola, the largest prison in the country, was built for 600 prisoners but houses 4,725.

A Judge in San José, [Costa Rica](#), has ordered that 370 prisoners should be relocated from the capital's San Sebastian prison to ease overcrowding in the prison, which is 70 percent over capacity. Judge Roy Murillo said that "overcrowding is unlawful and contrary to human dignity" and that if no other prisons had room, prisoners closest to completing their sentences or serving short sentences for minor offences should be released or relocated to temporary release programmes. In addition, the [Costa Rican](#) Justice Minister has asked the courts to establish alternative measures to prevent sending more people to prison. Alternatives would include pardons or parole for those sentenced to less than three years.

A report by the National Crime Records Bureau in [India](#) found that in 2012 there were 414 prisoners on death row in the country. The report also [found](#) that in the same period there were 1,813 children under the age of six years old living with their mothers in prison. There were around 1,100 women in prison in India in 2012.

22 NGOs from across [Europe](#), including ICPS, have called upon the European Union to take action on the problem of excessive pre-trial detention. Although pre-trial detention should only be used as a last resort, it is currently estimated that one in five prisoners within the EU has yet to receive a trial.

A new report by the prison reform advocacy and research organisation the Sentencing Project has found that in the [US](#) the number of convicted prisoners serving a life sentence has increased by nearly 12 percent since 2008, and the number of those serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole has increased by 22.2 percent. One in every nine prisoners is serving a life sentence with or without the possibility of parole, four times as many as in 1984.

A survey of the prison population by the [Brazilian](#) National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN) shows prisoners held on drug trafficking charges now account for 25 percent of the overall prison population. The number held on such charges increased by 30 percent from 106,491 in 2010 to 138,198 in 2012. Over the same period the prison population increased by ten percent, from 496,251 to 548,003.

## Health

Clean needle distribution in prisons is “poor and patchy” around the [world](#), despite evidence that it reduces the spread of infectious diseases and does not increase drug use, according to international expert Heino Stöver. Although the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organisation (WHO) both advocate needle and syringe exchanges for prisoners, only 60 prisons out of more than 10,000 worldwide have launched programmes. A WHO review of 55 European prison needle exchange programmes found no reported increase in drug use and no negative unintended consequences such as needles being used as weapons.

In a move praised by health bodies, the [Australian](#) Capital Territory government has reconfirmed its commitment to trialling a needle and syringe programme in the territory’s prisons. In the government’s plan to manage blood-borne viruses, regulated access to sterile injecting equipment is listed as an “actionable priority”, along with consistent and appropriate access to condoms and dental dams, and prisoners’ own razors and toothbrushes.

Also in [Australia](#), human rights advocates have blamed prison overcrowding and draconian sentencing for alarming rises in deaths, incidents of self-harm and assaults in Victoria’s prisons. Figures released by the Department of Justice showed that 13 people died in custody in 2012-13, up from four the previous year, and incidents of self-harm had increased, with eight out of every 100 prisoners harming themselves in 2012-13, double the rate of 2008.

The [South African](#) Correctional Services Department has admitted it is struggling to bring down the high number of unnatural deaths in prisons. 57 deaths in custody were reported in the last financial year, 26 of which were suicides. The Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative believes the Department is failing to reduce suicides behind bars by not taking the necessary preventive measures in cases where prisoners are a known suicide risk. The Department says it is trying to address the issue.

The number of self-injury incidents in [Canadian](#) federal penitentiaries has more than tripled since 2007, with 901 incidents of self-injury involving 264 prisoners recorded in 2012-13. The report from the Correctional Investigator called on the federal prison service to treat chronic self-injury first and foremost as a mental health concern, not a security or control issue.

The [Namibian](#) government's refusal to distribute condoms to prisoners is an impediment to controlling HIV transmission in prisons, according to a recent report by the Ombudsman. According to the report, the National Strategic Framework lists prisoners among those groups considered as 'most at risk', especially considering that seven percent of the country's prison population is known to be HIV positive and around 27.5 percent of those are on ARV treatment. The Director of the Human Rights Documentation Centre said the government's refusal to distribute condoms in prisons appeared to be directly related to anti-sodomy provisions contained in the Criminal Procedure Act and the common law prohibition of sodomy. The report also observed that there are limited HIV prevention and intervention programmes in prisons.

In the [US](#), the California senate has approved a plan for condoms to be distributed in adult prisons, despite the state's ban on having sex behind bars. The proposal, which has now been sent to the Assembly, aims to cut the spread of HIV, Hepatitis C and other diseases by requiring the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to make condoms initially available in five prisons by 2015, and in all 33 prisons by 2020.

Also in the [US](#), the Alabama Department of Corrections has ended the policy of segregating HIV positive prisoners at Julia Tutweiler Prison for Women, and plans to do the same with male prisoners next year. The changes are the result of a lawsuit filed by HIV positive prisoners in 2011, as a result of which a US District Judge found that the segregation policy violated the prisoners' rights.

[New Zealand](#) Ministry of Health figures show that 64 percent of prisoners have suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) compared with just two percent of the general population. Other studies put the figure even higher, with 80 percent of non-Maori and 90 percent of Maori prisoners suffering from TBI. A neurologist said it was "a given" that brain injury was linked to offending behaviour. Experts say proper recognition and rehabilitation of brain injuries would help people to manage their behaviour and could help reduce criminal behaviour.

Prisoners at the central prisons in [Cyprus](#) will soon have around the clock healthcare. The decision to implement 24 hour access to healthcare for prisoners is part of the country's attempts to address issues raised by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture when it visited Cyprus in 2008.

## **Treatment of prisoners**

Thousands of [Libyans](#) believed to have fought for ousted leader Muammar Gaddafi remain in prisons where they are regularly tortured and brutalised two years after the revolution, according to a new report by the United Nations. Despite attempts by the provisional

government to correct the ongoing dehumanisation, approximately 8,000 people remain in custody without charge. Officials have said they are committed to ending torture and enforcing the criminal justice process.

A new [Afghan](#) government committee which has been set up to investigate prison conditions should focus on meaningful reforms to end torture and other pervasive abuses, according to Human Rights Watch. HRW said Afghan detention centres were rife with serious abuse, including torture, medically invalid “virginity examinations” of women, and holding prisoners past their release date.

[South African](#) prison authorities have taken over management of the maximum security Mangaung correctional centre run by G4S after the private security contractor “lost effective control of the facility.” The move came after a series of violent riots and stabbings, as well as strikes by officers at the prison, which houses 3,000 high-risk prisoners. Subsequent [reports](#) also suggest that prisoners were forcibly injected with antipsychotic medicine and staff were using electroshock treatment to subdue and control prisoners. G4S has denied the claims.

Conditions in [South African](#) prisons more widely remain poor, with prisoners becoming increasingly frustrated with their treatment, the latest report of the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services has found. The report characterised 2012 as a year of uprisings in correctional centres, and also raised concerns about the high number of self-inflicted deaths in custody, severe overcrowding and lack of access to healthcare services.

Prison guards at Košice prison in [Slovakia](#) were found to be humiliating several prisoners. The private TV channel Markiza aired a video it received from an anonymous source showing prison guards pushing prisoners, shouting at them, forcing them to run along the corridors of the prison and kicking one of them when forcing him to sit in a chair. A Justice Ministry spokesperson said two of the guards had been suspended from service and disciplinary proceedings had been started against seven others.

The [Romanian](#) government has been ordered to pay two convicted prisoners a total of EUR 13,000 for keeping them in “inadequate” prison cells. In two separate cases the European Court of Human Rights found against the government, saying both prisoners had their human rights violated. One of the prisoners was held in a cell which was squalid and infested with rats, lice and bed bugs; had no heating in winter and no cooling in summer, and where he caught scabies and gastroenteritis due to the conditions. The other prisoner was held in a small, damp cell with no natural air or light.

Conditions of detention in [Moldova](#), including Transnistria, are deplorable according to the findings of a mission to the country by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). The mission found that prisoners and their families are constantly subject to racketeering, and torture is practised routinely and with impunity. Violence against and between prisoners creates a climate of fear and requests for prison transfers or cell changes are rarely accepted. Guards accused of abusing prisoners receive only minimal punishment.

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has urged [Ukraine](#) to step up its efforts to prevent the mistreatment of prisoners. It recommended developing an ethical culture among prison staff, improving staff-prisoner relations, including combating corrupt practices, and strengthening the role of healthcare staff in the prevention of ill-treatment. The committee also urged Ukraine to define limits and improve training on the use of force, to ensure the effectiveness of investigations into cases of possible ill-treatment, in particular through setting up without delay a national team specialised in the investigation of such cases, and to develop an effective national preventive mechanism.

Prisoners in [North Korea](#)'s prison camps have suffered starvation, torture and other "unspeakable atrocities", according to a report by UN human rights investigators. The findings were based on testimony from North Korean exiles, including those formerly held in political prison camps. Among those testifying were a woman who witnessed a female prisoner forced to drown her own baby in a bucket, and a man who had been imprisoned from birth and was forced to live on rodents, lizards and grass to survive. He had also been forced to witness the public execution of his mother and brother. The inquiry seeks to determine which institutions and officials are responsible for the atrocities.

A [Russian](#) news report suggests that the Federal Prison Service flies planeloads of convicted prisoners beyond the Arctic Circle to carry out hard labour. The prisoners work in shifts at the camp in Norilsk assembling steelworks for Norilsk Nickel.

Prisoners in several federal prisons across [Canada](#) went on strike to protest against a 30 percent cut in their pay. The government began deducting the money from prisoners' pay as part of a move to recover costs under the federal government's Deficit Reduction Action Plan. Despite inflation, prisoners' pay has not increased since the daily rate was set in 1981, even though Correctional Service Canada figures show costs have risen more than 700 percent in that time. Prisoners also have to use their pay to purchase items that the prisons no longer provide, such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, stationery and stamps. The Correctional Investigator described the decision to cut prisoners' pay as "insensitive and short sighted."

[Bahrain](#) has set up an independent commission on the rights of prisoners and detainees. The 12 member commission, to be chaired by the ombudsman, will monitor the conditions and treatment of prisoners and detainees to ensure they meet international standards. The members are entitled to visit all prisons and detention centres, talk directly with the prisoners and detainees, report cases of torture or mistreatment and issue recommendations to improve conditions and treatment.

## **Prison violence**

There has been a rise of more than 40 percent in the number of reported prison rapes and sexual assaults in the past year, according to the [South African](#) Correctional Services Minister. In 2011/12 175 prisoners reported being raped or sexually assaulted, with the number rising to 247 in 2013/13. A correctional services spokesman said measures were being taken to address the problem.

Five prisoners at the Edmonton Institution, a maximum security federal prison in [Canada](#), are suing guards, the warden and the federal government. They allege they were subject to beatings, abuse and racial slurs, and were forced by guards to fight with each other. The firm representing the prisoners said these suits were the first and more would follow. The allegations have yet to be proven in court.

Understaffing and overcrowding at federal [US](#) prisons is causing a significant increase in prisoner assaults on prison staff, the leader of the union representing correctional workers said in testimony delivered to the House Judiciary subcommittee that oversees the Federal Bureau of Corrections. While the number of prisoners in federal prisons has risen by 41 percent since 2000 the number of staff has only increased 19 percent, leading to a prisoner to staff ratio of five to one.

The use of torture during a prison riot in southern [Myanmar](#) in September was a violation of human rights, according to the National Human Rights Commission. The NHRC statement came after commission officials made an inspection tour of Kawthung Prison where the riot occurred. One prisoner was killed and seven others were injured during the incident. According to the statement, the riot was supposedly sparked after prison officials hit three prisoners with batons for arguing in a cell. The prisoners then tore down the roof and doors of the prison and burned the clothing and bed sheets of some of the staff. Prison officials then fired on the prisoners, injuring eight. One prisoner later died of head injuries. The commission said officials concerned should face action while new prison rules and laws should be adopted to replace the 1894 Prison Act which is still in use.

A prison riot in the north eastern state of Maranhão, [Brazil](#), left 13 prisoners dead and more than 30 injured. Rioting broke out after prisoners refused to allow an inspection of their cells, leading to a confrontation with guards. The standoff sparked violent clashes between opposing prison factions. The situation rapidly escalated with executions of prisoners occurring throughout the prison. Special elite troops were deployed to restore order to the prison.

At least 16 prisoners were killed in violence in Sabaneta prison in the western [Venezuelan](#) city of Maracaibo. Some of the prisoners were beheaded and others dismembered. A [subsequent](#) security sweep of the prison found more than a hundred weapons and tens of thousands of rounds of ammunition. Sixty nine people have been killed in Sabaneta prison so far this year. Also in [Venezuela](#), six prisoners were killed and two more injured in a fight between rival gangs for control of a prison in the southwestern state of Amazonas.

Six youths were killed in a fight at a prison for juvenile offenders in [El Salvador](#). The prisoners were strangled during a fight between rival gangs in the prison. Seven prisoners were killed in a prison riot in [Mexico](#), and two prisoners died in [Uruguay](#) when around 600 prisoners launched a protest demanding transfers to a new prison building.

At least 14 prisoners at [Greece](#)'s maximum security Korydallos prison were injured in a fight between prisoners which reportedly broke out after a Kurdish prisoner stabbed an Albanian. The prison is severely overcrowded, holding over 2,300 prisoners in conditions designed for 800.



## Developments in rehabilitation

More than 11,600 prisoners are participating in adult education and training programmes in [South Africa](#), according to the Correctional Services Minister. Between November 2012 and April 2013, 5,215 prisoners were trained in, among other things, agriculture, business, construction, food services, computing and welding.

More than 3,000 prisoners in the [Dominican Republic](#) have formally started learning to read and write as part of the “Quisqueya Learns with You” National Literacy Campaign. The programme was launched in a ceremony at La Victoria prison, head by the Presidency Minister who said these learning initiatives represented progress towards one of the government’s leading goals: universal access to education.

With the successful implementation of the pilot, the [Singapore](#) Prison Service plans to extend the deployment of the Inmate Self-Service Kiosk (iKiosk) across all the country’s prisons. iKiosk serves as a one-stop platform for prisoners to address their common rehabilitation needs. They can check out the outcomes of requests, apply for jobs, and obtain up to date information about their rehabilitation progress. The process also allows prison staff to focus on their other duties, including ensuring the security of the housing unit, counselling prisoners, designing training courses, enhancing staff-prisoner interaction and fostering collaboration with community partners.

A Community Integration Fair has been held in [Bermuda](#) bringing together 60 prisoners with 32 vendors, including 21 private companies. The Fair aimed to enhance rehabilitation efforts by “bridging the gap” between the prison and community organisations, as well as linking prisoners to resources such as employment agencies, potential employers and education or trade schools.

[Chilean](#) authorities are promoting a series of programmes aimed at reducing recidivism through work, with training and courses designed for the needs of the different regions where the prisons are located. The most recent initiative is a jobs website coordinated by the Chilean Gendarmeria under a public-private partnership, which monitors, serves and assists the country’s prison population. Since its launch in May 2012, the programme has helped 728 former prisoners find jobs in construction, telecommunications and manufacturing. Those who are selected enter the programme after demonstrating good behaviour and participating in specific training.

A new prisoner reintegration service is underway in [New Zealand](#). Five providers have been selected to operate the “Out of Gate” service which will support prisoners before, and immediately after they leave prison. Dedicated providers will support up to 4,000 prisoners serving sentences of less than two years to settle back into the community by helping them access employment, accommodation, education and training, and social services.

Nine prisoners from Sud Francilien prison in [France](#) have turned curators for an art showcase. The exhibition is entitled “Journey” and is a provocative but deliberate choice by



the prisoners, many of whom have spent a long time in prison. The prison's director hopes this will be the first of many cultural projects to help with rehabilitation.

The [US](#) federal prison population has grown so large that the Bureau of Prisons can no longer reasonably expect to meet its goal of employing a quarter of the prisoners, according to an internal Justice Department review. The government owned Federal Prison Industries (FPI) operates 83 facilities staffed by federal prisoners, who make products such as office furniture and military apparel for federal agencies. However since 2009 FPI has been losing an average of \$31 million per year and only employs seven percent of the total federal prisoner population, the lowest percentage in over 75 years.

About a dozen prisoners at the Airway Heights Corrections Centre in Washington State, [US](#), are training for jobs in the aerospace industry, the state's largest manufacturing sector. The prisoners are enrolled in a programme that will make them certified aerospace composite technicians. Their goal is a chance to gain employment at companies such as Boeing and its suppliers on release from prison.

Up to 270,000 prisoners in [Thailand](#) are to be drafted in to work for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) facing labour shortages. A 200-baht daily wage will be given to prisoners employed in primary goods production, with a higher wage given to those with specific skills. The project aims to help the prisoners find a career when they leave prison, and any prisoner who proves to be a good skilled labourer will be recommended to the SME operators on release.

Prisoners in the Northern Territory, [Australia](#), have been sent to work at a salt mine after the company had trouble recruiting staff. The work is part of the Territory's "Sentenced to a Job" programme through which prisoners from the lowest security classification can be used to work on both public and private projects. Five percent of their earnings go to a victims' assistance fund and \$125 a week is deducted to cover their board costs in prison. The prisoners receive \$60 a week spending money, and the remainder of what they earn is out into a trust fund which they are given when they are released from prison.

A decreasing number of prisoners in [Denmark](#) are being granted permission to attend school or take work outside of the prison in preparation for their return to society. The prison service found that despite a stable prison population the number of those granted furloughs to work or study had declined 27 percent since 2003. The change comes after a 2002 law required prisoners to serve half their sentence before they could be considered for furloughs. Previously prisoners needed to serve a third of their term. Criminal justice specialists said prisoners now have a harder time finding a programme they can complete before their release.

In the [US](#), the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) is rewarding hard working prisoners with gang tattoo removal. The service, which would cost several thousands of dollars on the outside, is offered only to participants of the LASD's Education-Based Incarceration programme, which allows prisoners to obtain diplomas, General Education Development tests, vocational certificates for various trades and even college degrees while imprisoned. More than 500 prisoners have undergone the tattoo removal procedure over

the last year and a half. A prison officer said “Removing these tattoos greatly improves their ability to get jobs and also improves their self-esteem, because now they don’t have that image of being a gang member.”

## **Sentencing and the law**

The Sultan of [Brunei](#) has announced strict new Islamic punishments for criminals, including amputation for theft and stoning for adultery. The punishments, which are set to come into force over the next six months, form part of the country’s new Shariah Penal Code and will apply to Muslims only.

[Uruguay](#) is set to become the first country in the world where the sale of cannabis will become legal and government-controlled. A senate vote to legalise the drug is expected in mid-November as part of an effort in the South American country to explore alternatives to the war on drugs. The head of Uruguay’s National Drugs Board said the government would set the price of cannabis low in the hope of pushing drug traffickers out of the market.

A change to the law in [Switzerland](#) has decriminalised marijuana, making possession of the drug a minor misdemeanour that will not go on a person’s criminal record. From now, anyone found with up to ten grams of the substance will be able to avoid all formal legal proceedings, instead paying an on-the-spot fine of CHF 100.

In [Australia](#) the Queensland attorney general has announced tough new laws to keep the worst sex offenders in prison until they die. Under the changes the attorney general can recommend to cabinet which prisoners should die in jail. Cabinet then refers the matter on to the governor in council to approve, taking the decision away from the courts.

Legislation that would allow those imprisoned for the most serious sexual and violent offences to be detained after they have completed their prison sentences has passed its first reading in the [New Zealand](#) Parliament. The bill would introduce public protection orders to hold those who are at a very high risk of committing further crime in a secure facility on prison grounds until it is deemed they no longer pose a threat to public safety. The legislation will now be considered by the Justice and Electoral Committee.

[Malaysia](#)’s bid to bring back detention without trial and toughen a range of other laws has caused concern among civil society groups who call the move politically motivated and a major step back for human rights. The changes to the 1959 Prevention of Crime Act provide for a board made up of three members and headed by a judge to issue detention orders for up to two years that can later be renewed. The suspect has no right to legal representation, according to a copy of the bill seen by Reuters, and lawyers said there would be limited scope to appeal against decisions. The Malaysian Bar Council described the changes as “repugnant to the rule of law.”

[Egypt](#)’s interim President has issued legislation to remove the maximum period of pre-trial detention for those facing the death penalty and life sentences. Previously, the maximum period of pre-trial detention for defendants facing the death penalty had been 24 months,

and 18 months for those facing a life sentence. It is not yet clear why the legislative amendment was issued.

Prisoners at the National Bilibid Prison in the [Philippines](#) will have easier access to legal services as the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) will open an office inside the prison. The Bureau of Corrections and PAO have signed a memorandum of understanding whereby the latter's lawyers would offer free legal services to prisoners. The agreement covers convicted prisoners serving more than three years. The lawyers' services will include coordination with other government agencies, and preparing and filing legal documentation.

The [Danish](#) Justice Ministry's plan to build a secure court inside Vestre Fængsel prison has met resistance from judges who say the two institutions should be kept apart. The Ministry says establishing a courthouse of Denmark's largest prison will make it safer to carry out trials against gang members, but the national judges' association fears it will blur the lines between police and the legal system. A spokesman said "to build a courthouse as an 'appendix' to Vestre Fængsel sends the wrong signal. People will only trust the courts if they appear independent, respectable and objective." The [Danish](#) justice minister has also proposed that former gang members should be allowed to serve their sentences in other Scandinavian prisons in order to help them start new lives, and said he would be discussing the proposal with his Nordic colleagues.

Only 13 percent of people who are arrested in [Israel](#) are able to consult with a defence attorney before questioning, according to a report by the Public Defender's Office. The report also criticised the Israel Prison Service for not informing prisoners of their right to legal representation at parole hearings. Prisoners often arrive at the hearing without a lawyer and are only then informed of their right to have a public defender or other counsel present to represent them.

## **Prison policy**

The [Turkish](#) Justice Minister has announced plans for the construction of 207 new prisons in the country over the next five years. The Minister said 75 of these were at the construction phase, 53 at the project phase, 50 at the planning stage and 29 at the bidding stage. A new prison has been inaugurated in [Macedonia](#) as part of a major government project for construction and refurbishment of prisons across the country.

The first of 24 new prisons being built in [Venezuela](#) has been inaugurated. The new prison has capacity for 1,400 prisoners and comprises minimum, medium and maximum security sections. The new prisons are part of a wider reform to the prison system, and prisoners will be required to work or study.

The [Thai](#) Justice Ministry is seeking approval for its plan to build 42 new prisons across the country, one of which will be Thailand's first super-maximum security (supermax) prison. The Minister said the new prisons were needed because existing prisons are old, overcrowded and located in the middle of populated communities. The supermax prison will be reserved for the most difficult and dangerous prisoners, including those with a track record of causing problems in the general prison population.

Prisoners moving through [New Zealand](#)'s new prison will be able to track their path to freedom. As they get closer to the main gatehouse they are nearing their release date. Factors deciding where prisoners are located on the site include the seriousness of offending, length of sentence, level of risk and behaviour whilst in the prison, with the highest level of security furthest from the exit.

The Gendarmería, [Chile](#)'s uniformed national prison service, staged a nationwide strike to denounce "the historic abandonment of the penitentiary system." Staff blocked access to the Ex Penitenciaría, one of Chile's iconic prisons, preventing prisoners and public defenders from entering. Their principal demands are the re-implementation of hazard pay, the training and professionalization of personnel, and changes to the command structure.

Prison officers in [Cambodia](#) must have obtained at least a high school diploma and are encouraged to have a bachelor's degree, according to a Royal Decree aimed at improving standards in the prison system and curbing a culture of endemic abuse and corruption. According to the decree, prison guards and other officials must not use their positions for personal gain, must take an examination before being hired and must be older than 25 years of age.

In Queensland, [Australia](#), the police minister is considering a plan to force jailed members of gangs to wear fluorescent pink uniforms. Currently prisoners in the state wear khaki prison tops that have been criticised as potential camouflage for escapees. The state premier agreed with the proposal, saying "We know that telling [the gang members] to wear pink is going to embarrass them."

Also in Queensland, [Australia](#), the attorney general has announced reforms to the juvenile justice system which will see repeat juvenile offenders publicly "named and shamed" and detention ceasing to be seen as a last resort. Juvenile prisoners who turn 17 while in detention and have more than six months left of their sentence will be transferred to an adult prison. The director of the Human Rights Law Centre said the reforms were in violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Centre would be exploring possible legal options.

The parliament of [Tajikistan](#) has approved amendments to the penal code granting more privileges to people serving life prison sentences. According to the amendments, such prisoners will now be able to receive four parcels a year by mail, four parcels brought to the prison by relatives, and two family visits. The new regulations effectively double the number of parcels and family visits per year. At least 50 prisoners are serving life sentences in the country.

Married prisoners in [Qatar](#) will be able to spend up to five hours with their wives and children in the privacy of two small villas which have recently been built in the Central Prison for this purpose. In some cases the visits can be extended to a whole day. The two villas, each of which has a well equipped kitchen and living room, are in addition to the two conjugal visits rooms already provided by the prison.

The government of the [Bahamas](#) has announced plans to introduce the Correctional Services Bill 2013 to replace the current Prison Act which is 70 years old. The new Bill will allow the prison service to be re-named the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services. Prisoners will be assessed by a correctional board and placed accordingly, and will also be required to open an account with a reputable bank.

The [New Zealand](#) Corrections Minister says a number of prison regulations are being changed which will affect remand and transgender prisoners. Remand prisoners will soon be given an individual security classification, replacing the current system where all remand prisoners are treated as high security. This will mean that remand prisoners who do not pose a high safety risk will have better access to rehabilitation programmes including drug, alcohol and education programmes. A more flexible system is also being introduced for transgender prisoners whereby if the sex on their birth certificate has been changed they will be managed in accordance with their legal sex. Transgender prisoners whose sex on their birth certificate has not been changed can apply to be moved into a prison with their identified gender, excluding those serving or facing charges for serious sexual offences. These applications will be considered on a case by case basis. The aim is to address risks of victimisation and assault, while taking into account the welfare of all prisoners.

Human rights judges have declared that [Turkey's](#) automatic and indiscriminate ban on prisoners' voting rights is too harsh. In its judgment in the case of *Söyler v. Turkey*, which is not final, the European Court of Human Rights held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as the ban on convicted prisoners' voting rights was automatic and indiscriminate and did not take into account the nature or gravity of the offence, the length of the prison sentence or the prisoner's individual conduct or circumstances.

In the [US](#), the Governor of California has won approval of his plan to spend more than \$1 billion to rent thousands of prison cells owned by private companies Corrections Corp. of America and Geo Group to temporarily meet a federal court deadline to reduce overcrowding. The state faces a December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline to remove 10,000 prisoners from state prisons to reduce their population to 137.5 percent of designed capacity. The plan avoids the possibility of releasing thousands of prisoners.

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