



# INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

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Welcome to the twenty eighth edition of the International Prison 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 July to 31 August 2015. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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### **Prison populations**

A United Nations human rights expert has called on [Brazilian](#) Federal and State authorities to urgently address the issue of prison overcrowding in the country and show genuine commitment to implement measures against torture. “Many of the facilities visited are severely overcrowded – in some instances close to three times their actual capacity,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan E. Méndez. “This leads to chaotic conditions inside the facilities, and greatly impacts on the living conditions of prisoners and their access to legal defence, health care, psycho-social support, work and education opportunities, as well as sun, fresh air and recreation.” Mr. Méndez’ call comes at the end of a 12-day official visit to Brazil, where he conducted unannounced visits to places of detention such as police stations, pre-trial facilities, penitentiaries, juvenile detention centres, as well as mental health institutions. Through these visits, the independent expert saw how severe overcrowding generates tension and a violent atmosphere, in which physical and psychological ill-treatment of prisoners becomes the norm.

[Myanmar](#) has pardoned and released 6,966 prisoners, including 210 foreigners, the government says. The amnesties, which the information ministry says the president issued "on humanitarian grounds", come ahead of general elections in November. It is the latest in a series of amnesties brought about by the government in Myanmar.

The [Egyptian](#) president has pardoned 424 prisoners to mark Eid Al-Fitr. The decision is in keeping with the convention of pardoning prisoners during national and religious holidays. In addition to the release of the 424 prisoners, President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi also offered a conditional release for 101 other prisoners. According to a presidential spokesperson the pardoned prisoners include those who had spent over 15 years in jail prior to 25 January of this year. The pardon also includes prisoners who have served half of their prison terms to date, if those terms are longer than six months. Pardoned prisoners remain on parole for five years, while those offered conditional release remain on parole until the expiration of their sentence.

The [Pakistani](#) President approved a request by the Prime Minister to grant special reductions in prison terms for prisoners on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. According to Radio Pakistan, remission would be applicable to prisoners not involved in terrorist, anti-state or heinous crimes. Remission of 90 days would be granted to prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment while 45 days remission will be accorded to all prisoners. Total remission will be given to male prisoners aged 65 years or above, and female prisoners aged 60 years and above. A special reduction of one year has also been granted to female prisoners who have their children with them, and a total remission of sentence has been approved for juvenile prisoners who have served one third of their term.

More than 118,000 prisoners across [Indonesia](#) have been granted sentence reductions on the occasion of the nation's 70th independence anniversary. An official with the Justice Ministry's Directorate General of Corrections, said all eligible prisoners, except those serving life in prison and those on death row, received sentence cuts of up to three months. The cuts also allowed 5,682 prisoners to be released. The official said that among the aims of regular sentence cuts, handed out during major public holidays, was the need to address the severe overcrowding in Indonesian prisons.

## Health

In [Canada](#), a proposed class-action lawsuit filed in an Ontario court alleges the federal government fails to provide adequate care to mentally ill prisoners while relying far too heavily on solitary confinement as a way to deal with them. The case, if certified by the court, would pit the Attorney General of Canada against federal prisoners diagnosed with mental illness between 1992 and the present. The lawsuit, which contains allegations not proven in court, is seeking at least \$600 million in damages and estimates hundreds of mentally ill prisoners could be part of the action if it is certified. "They are being warehoused and they are being subjected to extended periods of time in solitary confinement because the federal prison system doesn't know what to do with them," said lawyer James Sayce. "The effect is . . . the illnesses get worse, and you have serious pain and emotional stress being suffered by these unwell prisoners." A statement of claim alleges that those tasked with caring for mentally ill prisoners in federal prisons have treated them with "contempt, prejudice, indifference and abuse." It claims prison staff are unqualified to administer, control, protect and care for mentally ill prisoners and instead rely almost exclusively on "force, compliance and behavioural inducement methods."

Western [Australia](#) has opened the first Disability Justice Centre to provide “civilised treatment” for prisoners with mental disorders. The centre is the result of the four-year campaign to create a “declared place” for people considered unfit for standard jails. The Mentally Impaired Accused Review Board can now decide to send mentally-impaired persons accused of a crime to the new justice centre to be housed and supported.

[Botswana](#)'s court of appeal has upheld a ruling that foreign prisoners should receive free treatment for HIV/Aids. Foreign prisoners were previously expected to pay for their own medication, unlike local prisoners. Two HIV-positive prisoners had challenged the government's refusal to pay for their anti-retrovirals (ARVs). The UN estimates that about 25% of people aged between 15 and 49 are HIV-positive in Botswana.

There were 59 deaths in [Belgian](#) prisons in 2014, 18 of which were suicides, according to the *Sudpresse* paper. The figure is a slight increase on 2013, when there were 56 deaths (14 were suicides). Bruges prison, which is the biggest in the country, has had the most deaths with 12, including 4 suicides. Gaëtan de Dorlodot, the medical director at St Gilles prison, is worried about “the lack of policies to prevent these suicides in Belgium”. He says that 60 percent of suicides in prison happen within the first four days of incarceration. He said the stress of being imprisoned, reflection on the crime committed, or the prospect of facing professional or social isolation explains a lot of these suicides.

Prisoner deaths in [US](#) state prisons and local jails increased for the third year in a row in 2013, hitting the highest number since 2007, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). In 2013, 4,446 prisoners died—131 more deaths than the previous year. There were 967 local jail deaths in 2013. There were fewer deaths due to illness, such as liver disease or cancer. However, BJS reported “an increase in unnatural causes of death, such as suicide, drug or alcohol intoxication, accident and homicide,” leading to the overall upswing. In 2013, 327 prisoners killed themselves, according to the BJS. The local jail suicide rate went up from 40 to 46 prisoner suicides per 100,000, for example. Since 2009, the jail suicide rate has risen by 12 percent.

There were 212 deaths in [Turkish](#) prisons in the first six months of 2015, according to a report published by the *Radikal* news portal. Of the 212 deaths in Turkey's prisons, 176 were from natural causes, 29 people committed suicide and seven more died from other causes. This number is strikingly higher than the 2005 total figure of 59 deaths.

The [Canadian](#) federal correctional investigator says he is concerned about the number of deaths in federal prisons after three in Nova Scotia facilities in just over three months has added to the national total. He said in the first four months of the 2015-16 fiscal year there were 31 deaths across the country, while in all of the prior fiscal year there were 67 deaths. “After the first four months of the year we’re almost at 50 per cent of the deaths of all of last year,” he said. “I’m concerned that if the trend continues we’ll have a higher rate of death in custody than we did last year.”

## Treatment of prisoners

[Costa Rica](#)'s Supreme Court has given the San Sebastián prison one month to come up with a plan to deal with its "cruel and degrading" conditions. The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, also known as Sala IV, ruled in favour of a prisoner who denounced the overcrowded conditions in his cell. The dormitory he was in was designed to hold 20 prisoners but currently holds 47. According to a statement from Sala IV, prisoners "are sleeping on pieces of mattresses or on the ground, putting up with the cold" and rats climbing out of the drains at night. The court ordered prison system director Reynaldo Villalobos Zúñiga and Mariano Barrantes Angulo, director of the San José facility, to take steps to mitigate the overcrowding in the prison within one month.

Allegations of the beating and electrocution of prisoners in [South Africa](#) have sparked calls for torture charges to be laid against prison authorities. The alleged assaults are being investigated by human rights lawyers, the Wits Justice Project, police and the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services. Prisoners at the Losperfontein prison were allegedly beaten with batons, doused in water, electrocuted with tasers and denied medical attention. Dozens of prisoners were apparently tortured for days as warders tried to get information about those who had helped a murderer, serving a life sentence, to escape. The Correctional Services Department has refuted the claims, saying it was prisoners who carried out the assaults.

Conditions faced by some prisoners at a prison in Western [Australia](#)'s south are inhumane and a breach of Australian and international standards, a report has found. The Office for the Inspector of Custodial Services released his most recent inspection report, which revealed prisoners in older areas of Bunbury Regional Prison were forced to share cells smaller than that which is demanded by national standards. The prison holds about 230 medium and maximum security prisoners with an additional 72 beds in a minimum-security pre-release unit. The Inspector said the consequences of overcrowding in prisons were significant and had a detrimental impact on the health of detainees. "The Australian and New Zealand standard is that there should be a space of 7.5 square metres for a single occupied cell," he said. "There are cells in unit one which are only six square metres, and they're being doubled up. The consequences of putting two men in a six square metre cell are significant, it's a far too small a space. You also get issues around airflow, so there's condensation on mattresses, so it really is inappropriate and inhumane."

The [Cambodian](#) Minister of Interior has ordered senior officials to conduct unannounced inspections of the Kingdom's detention centres in an effort to ensure that prisoners are not receiving ill treatment. The order was given in a letter from Interior Minister Sar Kheng dated August 7, and sent to immigration, rehabilitation and other detention centres nationwide. "In accordance with the recommendations and additional protocols of the United Nations to prevent torture, cruel violence, inhumane acts, abuse or undue punishment, to which Cambodia is a state party, the ministry will order task force members and secretary of state members to prevent undue punishment, inspect, check and interview [at prisons] nationally, without informing them beforehand," the letter says. The same letter orders those in charge of prisons and detention centres to facilitate the work of visiting national inspectors.

Prisoners at one of [Bolivia](#)'s most violent prisons went on hunger strike demanding they be fed at least as well as police dogs and horses. The prisoners called for an increase in the prison food budget, currently eight bolivianos (NZ\$1.76) per prisoner per day. "The horses at the military academy have a daily food allocation of 15 bolivianos, and it's about to go up to 20. Some police dogs have 15 bolivianos a day for their food," strike leader Fidel Herrera told TV network Gigavision. The prisoners called for a daily meal budget of 25 bolivianos. Interior Minister Carlos Romero said such a budget would "turn prison into a prize for criminals". A few days later the [prisoners](#) called off the hunger strike after reaching a deal with authorities over their food allowance. The agreement means the prisoners will accept a modest increase already proposed by the government. In addition, a prison health centre will be constructed, with medical items financed by the government.

Twenty-six people affiliated with a [Uruguay](#) juvenile detention centre will be tried for involvement in alleged "torture" of four youths, after video of a prison beating sparked public outrage. Seventeen defendants are charged with torture, while the nine others will be tried as accomplices. A video showing more than 30 individuals beating and mistreating four detainees at the Montevideo centre in July was broadcast widely across Uruguay's media. The defendants face 20 months to eight years in prison.

## **Prison violence**

The government of [New Zealand](#) has taken control of a prison being run under contract by Serco after evidence emerged of a "fight club" among prisoners. The Department of Corrections has invoked a "step-in" clause in the NZ\$300 million contract with Serco to run Mount Eden Corrections Facility and installed a director and management team to oversee day to day running, while keeping Serco staff on site. The department, which has also launched an investigation, took the step after video footage of prisoners fighting was posted to YouTube and prisoners appeared to be in possession of mobile phones.

A disturbance involving 60 prisoners at Cloverhill Prison in [Ireland](#) was brought to an end by staff in riot gear. Gardaí have launched a criminal investigation into the disturbance that saw at least one prisoner held hostage and seriously assaulted and 10 others injured and hospitalised. The Irish Prison Service said the governor of Cloverhill ordered its riot trained officers, known as control and restraint teams, to move into the yard to remove the ringleaders of the protest after at least four hours of talks. The order was made after a prisoner who was being held hostage was set upon by a group of others. The prisoner was beaten and suffered a broken arm before being slashed in the face with a shiv, or makeshift knife.

Thirteen prisoners were wounded in disturbances at the jail in the [Mexican](#) Caribbean resort city of Cancun, according to officials. Two of the prisoners were seriously wounded in the fight, Quintana Roo State Public Safety Secretary, Juan Pedro Mercader Rodriguez, said. An attack on the leader of a prison gang led to a second fight as the man was being transported to Cancun General Hospital for treatment, Mercader said.

Hundreds of [Syrian](#) prisoners at the main prison in the city of Hama rioted in a protest against jail conditions and harsh sentences, a monitor and rights activists said. A leaked video purportedly from inside the jail showed scores of prisoners with their faces covered chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greater) with footage of a ward that had furniture and equipment ransacked and beds turned into barricades to sealed iron gates. The UK Observatory for Human Rights said gunfire shots were heard outside the prison in the city located 213 km north of the capital Damascus, after prisoners, mostly held on terror-related charges and for joining protests against the state, took control of several major wards and ransacked prison quarters. Officials were not immediately available for comment and state media did not mention the incident.

At least 14 prisoners were killed when violence broke out between two factions of a notorious gang in an [El Salvador](#) prison, according to an official. The killings happened in Quezaltepeque prison, north of the capital San Salvador, and were linked to an internal dispute involving the Barrio 18 gang, a spokesman for the presidency told AFP. The Directorate General of Prisons, on Twitter, said it was "presumed to be an act of purification among gang members."

A 71-year-old prisoner died as a result of a riot that broke out between prisoners at Folsom Prison in California, [US](#). The riot involved approximately 70 prisoners. Although correctional officers suppressed the riot with pepper spray and warning shots from rifles, it was not before Hugo Pinell was killed. A number of people were injured as well, including five who were hospitalised and treated for stab wounds. Other injured prisoners were treated on-site. No officers were hurt during the riot. It is unclear exactly why or how the riot started.

## **Developments in rehabilitation**

[Turkish](#) prisoners have been working on the excavations of the Yemişçi Kapanı Ottoman Inn, which is located in the garden of the iconic Selimiye Mosque, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2011. Some 50 prisoners from the open prison in Turkey's northwestern province of Edime have started working at the Inn's excavation and landscape work project with the aim of unearthing the inn, which is more than 400 years old, without harming the nearby mosque. The prisoners, who wear orange coloured t-shirts, are watched over by jail wardens while working on the excavation with the necessary digging tools. The Governor of Edimi said the suggestion to bring in the prisoners had come from him, adding the prisoners would better reintegrate into society by working on the project.

Prisoners in the Windhoek Correctional Facility, [Namibia](#), are taught manual skills in a workshop as part of their ongoing rehabilitation. The workshop comprises various divisions such as upholstery, carpentry, tailoring and panel beating. The prisoners, who go to the workshop with very limited to no skills in handiwork, are able to learn new skills which they can later use when released from prison. At the tailoring division the prisoners are responsible for sewing uniforms, bedding and pyjamas for prison facilities across the country. The prisoners, who spend up to nine hours a day at the workshop, work there for up to four years prior to their release from prison. As they are released and vacancies in the workshop become available, other prisoners are recruited. "They get incentives. They are paid for the work that they're doing. They start with N\$30 and in the process that amount

increases,” explained the senior workshop supervisor.

At least 100 [Singaporean](#) prisoners a year will get the chance to secure jobs in the food and beverage (F&B) industry - even before they are released. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (Score) and the Restaurant Association of Singapore (RAS) was signed yesterday to help prisoners find employment in the sector. The MOU will allow both parties to further tap the potential of talented ex-prisoners and RAS' pool of employers in the sector. After prisoners have been assessed for suitability and the relevant training is provided, employers will conduct interviews in prison and make hiring decisions on the spot.

In [Australia](#) the Queensland Government has announced plans to open the first training prison of its kind to help ease critical jail overcrowding across the state. The \$145 million plan will see the old Borallon Correctional Centre recommissioned and turned into an "earn or learn" facility, catering specifically for 18 to 30-year-old prisoners. The Corrections Minister said the prison was necessary and would house about an extra 500 prisoners. "We want prisoners using their time productively so that they can learn to read or write and finish grade 12, undertake a certificate or diploma level qualification so that when they get out they will be job ready. We are also hoping to be able to work with the local schools... and any suitable registered training organization as well as perhaps the universities." Those working on the front line with prisoners said while they believed the plan was a step in the right direction, more needed to be done to address the root causes of incarceration.

A [US](#) private corrections service has introduced a new tablet computer, the JP5mini tablet, made specifically for use by prisoners. The company has previously launched its JP4 tablet – with around 60,000 in use across US prisons today – but the new JP5mini has one big advantage; it can connect to wireless networks, which many prisons are beginning to implement. The tablet allows prisoners to access music, email, video chat and more. The tablet runs a locked down version of Android and offers a censored experience designed to ensure that prisoners remain connected with the outside world and are able to fit back into community once they have served their time. Prisoners can use the tablet to send messages and email, but all communications – incoming and outgoing – are manually monitored and individually approved by prison staff.

The [New Zealand](#) Corrections Minister attended the launch of Secure Online Learning for prisoners at Rimutaka Prison. Secure Online Learning (SOL) will be implemented nationwide after a successful six-month pilot with young prisoners at Christchurch Men's Prison. It allows carefully selected prisoners to securely access 12 educational websites. No other websites are available to them. SOL will replace paper based-assessment and learning processes which are prone to inaccuracies. "Many education and training providers are moving to online delivery and employers are increasingly seeking employees with basic IT skills," says the Minister. "Prisoners need to be confident working in an online environment," he said. "Educational achievement is important and the reality for many prisoners is that they will reach their first academic milestone in prison. By giving more prisoners access to programmes that improve their literacy and numeracy skills, they can gain qualifications and participate meaningfully in rehabilitative programmes and employment training. We know that individuals who have a job are less likely to commit

offences so by increasing the skills prisoners have on release, we will increase their chances of getting a job.," SOL will be implemented nationwide by June 2017.

Intensive psychological treatment and early release on parole are far more effective at reducing reoffending among high risk prisoners than a requirement to serve out the full prison sentence, new research from [New Zealand](#) shows. Prisoners who completed the Correction Department's intensive Special Treatment Unit Rehabilitation Programme (STURP) were 37 per cent less likely than similar but untreated prisoners to be re-imprisoned within a year of release, according to the study. The STURP programme is offered at four prisons nationwide and is only available to those serving a sentence of more than two years who have a 70 per cent risk of re-imprisonment within five years of release. An 8-12-month residential programme, it helps prisoners understand why they offend and teaches tools to calm high risk situations before they get out of control. The research, which tracked 271 high risk offenders, also found that both treated and untreated prisoners released early on parole were 30 per cent more likely to avoid reconviction over a period of more than two years. The longer the parole period, the more reconviction fell, even when taking into account the factors making early-release prisoners more likely to succeed.

More than 20 years after prisoners had been banned from receiving student aid, some [US](#) federal and state prisoners could be eligible for Pell grant money to take college courses while still behind bars. The program will allow, on a temporary basis, federal grants to be used to cover college costs for prisoners for the first time since Congress excluded them from student aid in 1994. It will last three to five years and be open to prisoners who are eligible for release, particularly within the next five years. Prisoners could be eligible for the money as early as autumn 2016. Pell grants are for low-income people and do not have to be repaid.

## **Sentencing and the law**

The lower house of [Brazil's](#) congress has approved a constitutional amendment that reduces the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years of age. The approval came one day after lawmakers narrowly defeated a similar version of the amendment that would have allowed 16-year-olds to be charged with rape, murder, drug trafficking, assault and battery followed by death, as well as aggravated robbery. But some congressmen switched their vote and approved a new version of the bill that eliminated drug trafficking and aggravated robbery from the list of crimes 16-year-olds could be held accountable for. The amendment must be submitted to a second round of voting at the chamber of deputies before being sent to the senate.

The Acting Chief Justice of [Sierra Leone](#) has launched a two-year project aimed at developing sentencing and bail policies and guidelines. The project is undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and funded by the US Department of State with the aim of reducing the number of people detained before trial, and reducing overcrowding in prisons. The new bail instruments will involve the creation of guidelines and policies for magistrates and judges regarding when defendants should be detained before trial. The instruments, which are to be rolled out in 2016, will help ensure consistent sentencing across the country, so that justice will be the same

everywhere in the country. It will also help make sure people are incarcerated only when absolutely necessary, by providing a clear, consistent set of procedures for all Sierra Leone's magistrates and judges.

[Jamaica](#)'s justice minister has signed an order to expunge some marijuana-related convictions. The minister said that he signed an order to provide a path for people to get criminal records purged if they have minor convictions for smoking or possessing marijuana. In April, drug law amendments went into effect that partially decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana and paved the way for a lawful medical marijuana sector in Jamaica. The act made possession of up to 2 ounces of the drug a petty offence that would not result in a criminal record. Before that, officials estimated 300 young men each week got criminal records and sometimes associated lifelong stigma for possessing small amounts of marijuana.

The [Turkish](#) Ministry of Justice has prepared a draft bill that will bring major changes to the judicial process such as the introduction of plea bargaining, as well as the expansion of cases that may be settled without litigants facing charges. The draft bill allows for negotiations between the guilty party and the prosecutor's office that may bring a reduced prison term if they plead guilty to certain charges. This is tentatively entitled "simplified judgment" and will be mostly applicable for crimes carrying a five-year prison sentence. It will be subject to approval by judges at the court. Plea-bargaining will be applicable for crimes ranging from injury, threat, abduction, violation of privacy, theft and lesser crimes, while suspects charged with homicide and other, more serious crimes, will not be eligible. The planned bill also raises limits on posting bail. Defendants charged with crimes carrying a sentence of up to two years in prison will now be eligible for bail. Bail is currently only applicable for crimes carrying a prison term of three months and less.

New bail legislation which will require judges to provide reasons for bail decisions has been published in [Ireland](#). Currently, a judge may refuse bail if it is believed that a suspect will not turn up for their trial, if they are likely to interfere with witnesses, if they are charged with a serious crime or if there is evidence they are likely to commit another serious crime. The new measures will give gardaí the power of arrest without warrant for a breach of bail condition. The legislation also means courts must give reasons for bail decisions and must consider persistent serious offending when deciding whether or not to grant bail.

A new type of supervision order may result in people being punished twice for the same crime, the South [Australian](#) Council for Civil Liberties (SACCL) has said. Legislation passed by the South Australian Parliament earlier this month gives the Attorney-General power to apply to the Supreme Court for an "extended supervision order" for a serious sexual or violent offender. The conditions of the order may include electronic monitoring or restricted communications with specific people, and can remain in place for up to five years. The legislation applies to people who are imprisoned, have been imprisoned, or who are under supervision for a serious sexual or violent offence. SACCL committee member and lawyer George Mancini said the orders undermined the basic legal principle that people should not be punished twice for the same crime.

The [Cambodian](#) Ministry of Social Affairs has drafted a law on juvenile justice that will soon be moved forward for approval and debate at the legislature. The new law, as drafted, aims to provide rehabilitation opportunities for juveniles, rather than simple prison sentences, and meets international standards, officials say. An adviser to the Ministry of Social Affairs said the new law—the result of fact-finding tours to Australia, New Zealand and Thailand—gives juveniles prosecuted under the new Penal Code a chance to reform themselves, rather than land in jail. Juveniles could be put under the supervision of parents and social workers, rather than imprisoned, he said. “It helps them behave and be integrated into society.”

A Jamaican who claimed his constitutional rights were infringed because he was not allowed to apply for parole after serving a third of a jail sentence has won a landmark victory in [Bermuda](#)'s Supreme Court. The prisoner launched legal action because as a foreign national he was denied the opportunity to be released on license after serving a third of his sentence although he was otherwise qualified for such early release. He claimed that the provisions of the Prison Act 1979, which set down the rules surrounding prisoners' access to parole, breached section 12 - that prevents discrimination on the grounds of place of origin - of the Bermuda constitution. In a written judgment, Chief Justice Ian Kawaley ruled in favour of the prisoner saying his constitutional rights had been infringed.

## **Prison policy**

The [Ghanaian](#) President has launched a 10-year strategic plan to transform the country's prisons, with a pledge to increase the budgetary allocation to the Ghana Prisons Service in next year's budget. The increased funding, he said, would help transform the penal system by, among other things, providing vehicles, logistics, communication equipment and accommodation. The strategic plan, along with a fundraising campaign being run by the Prisons Service, known as the Project Efiase, is expected to improve the welfare of prisoners

The home ministry of [Maldives](#) has transferred 20 prisoners to house arrest and island arrest under a pilot tagging project. The prisoners were released with an electronic tagging device attached to the ankle, which will send out a signal if they step out of a restricted area. Home minister Umar Naseer announced last year that prisoners will be categorised into four groups based on security risks. The prisoners in the least dangerous category will be tagged and released for work and study programmes with the electronic tags. Naseer said that in order to be eligible for the scheme, prisoners will have to undergo a security screening and will also have to be nearing the end of their sentence.

Facing a capacity problem in prisons, [Turkish](#) authorities have moved to ease conditions under which prisoners can transfer to open or minimum-security prisons. A new regulation enacted by the Justice Ministry decreased the requirement for transfer to open prisons. Under the new regulation, prisoners with good conduct will be eligible for transfer. Time spent in open prisons allows for a reduction in sentences as a 2012 regulation allows prisoners to be released one year earlier than their original release date if they spend at least six months in an open prison. Open prisons offer a more relaxed prison environment for prisoners and are more focused on rehabilitation with opportunities for prisoners to take up employment inside the prison. Perimeter security does not exist in open prisons and

their capacity is less than 500 people, unlike other prisons. Prisoners are also eligible to spend one or more days outside the prison.

Latest figures from the [Hong Kong](#) Correctional Services Department show that in the past five years the value of products made, and services provided by, prisoners has steadily grown. Last year, the city's prisoners made products and provided services with a total commercial value of HK\$461 million. The police and fire services buy many of the products made by prisoners. Other buyers include the Highways Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. The goods produced by prisoners include office furniture, staff uniforms, hospital linen, filter masks, fibreglass litter containers, traffic signs, metal railings, precast concrete kerbs for infrastructure projects, and laminated books for public libraries and local universities, printing products, file jackets and envelopes. Prisoners also do laundry for the Hospital Authority, the Department of Health and the Fire Services Department.

The [Qatari](#) Penal and Correctional Institutions Department (PCID) has introduced and enhanced various services and facilities to further improve the living conditions and training of prisoners at the Central Prison. Among the measures are comprehensive medical services and educational programmes, new buildings for fresh initiatives and the renovation of some existing facilities. A PCID prisoners' affairs officer said that as soon as a prisoner entered the jail, a study was conducted on his case and family conditions. "Based on the findings and in co-ordination with the social affairs department, a monthly sum based on relevant legal provisions is paid to his family." The PCID has enhanced its partnership with civil society organisations to provide prisoners who are due for release with adequate care, such as support with obtaining employment. The department has also completed the construction and furnishing of two villas designated for conjugal visits. The villas, where a prisoner can spend a day with his wife and children in complete privacy, include all necessary utilities and services.

The [New Zealand](#) High Court has ruled the blanket ban on prisoner voting contravenes the Bill of Rights. The High Court has ruled the ban is unfair because it applies to all prisoners in jail at the time of an election, regardless of the severity of their sentences. However legal experts have said that does not mean the ban is now automatically lifted as it is possible for other legislation to supercede the Bill of Rights.

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