



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

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Welcome to the twenty seventh 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 May to 30 June 2015. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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Prison populations

Fewer people were sent to prison in [Sweden](#) in 2014 than in any other year since the 1950s, according to new figures from Sweden's Prison and Probation Service (Kriminalvården). Last year 8,943 people were sentenced to a stint in jail, the lowest figure in more than six decades. The number of prisoner admissions in Sweden has been steadily falling in recent years after a high in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1989, more than 15,000 people were sent to jail. According to Sweden's Prison and Probation Service, the number of people put under probationary sanctions has also dropped to 6,405, the lowest figure since 2001.

Women of aboriginal decent now make up more than 35 percent of the female prison population according to the Correctional Investigator of [Canada](#). Aboriginal women represent about four percent of the general population. Dawn Harvard, interim president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, says there is much work to be done. The justice system lacks an understanding of the lives of indigenous women, Harvard said, adding that racism and poverty are the main factors contributing to the number of aboriginal women in prison. Harvard said that to address the issue, changes are needed at all levels of the justice system including: training for police, judges and corrections officers about the history and current circumstances of indigenous peoples and communities; better access to advocates for aboriginal families and interventions for young indigenous people who become involved with the justice system.

[Australia](#) needs to take drastic action to reverse the over-representation of Indigenous young people in juvenile detention centres or face losing another generation of first peoples to failed government policies, according to a landmark Amnesty International report. The report says that rates of Indigenous youth imprisonment are the highest they have been since the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody handed down its report in 1991. In 2013-14, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 26 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous children. According to 2012-2013 figures, one in every 28 Indigenous boys aged 10 to 17 had spent time in detention, compared to one in 544 for non-Indigenous boys. Indigenous representation among girls in detention was even higher – one in 113 Indigenous girls aged 10 to 17 had spent time in detention, compared to one in 2,439 non-Indigenous girls.

People aged 18-24 account for a quarter of all people committed to prison in [Ireland](#) — and more than two thirds of them reoffend after release, according to a report by the Irish Penal Reform Trust. Penal reformers said the current system is “failing too many young adults”, often making them “more, not less, likely” to reoffend. The report said this age group accounted for 26 percent of those committed to prison in 2013 and 24 percent in 2014.

A United Nations torture prevention body has called on the [Philippine](#) government to address the “chronic” congestion of detention facilities in the country and to finally enact a law that will safeguard the rights of prisoners. In a statement, the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT) urged the government to look into the recommendations provided by the body’s six-member delegation that inspected various prisons during a recently concluded fact-finding mission in the country. Among their recommendations are “to deal urgently with prison overcrowding and improve independent monitoring of places of detention to protect people deprived of their liberty against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.”

More than 500 prisoners held in jails across [Nepal](#) were granted amnesty on the country's Republic Day, a move prompted by damage caused to many prisons by April's devastating earthquake. Those granted amnesty did not include prisoners convicted of serious crimes such as murder, rape, kidnapping, human trafficking and drug smuggling. Sixteen prisoners held in the central jail in Kathmandu were killed and more than 90 others injured when a section of the building collapsed in the April 25 quake. Three of Nepal's 74 prisons were destroyed by the earthquake and 36 others damaged.

The [United Arab Emirates'](#) Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan has pardoned 879 prison prisoners in honour of the Islamic month of Ramadan. The 879 prisoners were serving jail terms due to personal debts. President Khalifa ordered the total debt sum to be reimbursed by the UAE government. UAE attorney-general Salim Saeed Kubaish said the decision underscored the president's commitment "to preserve the unity of the UAE and direct all its citizens' energies towards building a better future."

Health

Newly admitted [Canadian](#) federal prisoners can be denied prescription medication for 30 days or more while they wait for to be assessed by prison doctors, a dangerous practice with

potentially far-reaching health consequences, especially for prisoners dealing with mental-health issues. The revelation is contained in an unreleased prison ombudsman investigation that identifies a series of flaws in Correctional Service Canada's (CSC) drug plan. The report, conducted by the federal Correctional investigator and obtained through Access to Information legislation, comes at a time when the agency faces unprecedented scrutiny in how it deals with prisoners facing mental-health issues, a segment of the prison population that has increased by 60 to 70 per cent since 1997. CSC's own physicians told investigators that they have insufficient time "to meet and assess all new admissions to federal custody," sometimes leaving prisoners to wait a month or more for an admitting physician to approve prescriptions. During that wait, CSC regularly discontinues a prisoner's outside prescriptions, according to the investigation.

There are six doctors for every 4.984 prisoners in [Costa Rica](#)'s five most overcrowded prisons according to the Defensora de los Habitantes (Ombudswoman), Montserrat Solano. The Ombudswoman made her complaint to a Ministerio de Justicia public meeting and called on authorities to make improvements to the prison health system. "We have received an increasing number of complaints in recent years about the care provided to prisoners in health services," said Solano. The Ombudswoman noted the prisons with a lack of medical staff are the San Carlos (with one doctor per 791 prisoners); San Sebastian, (one per 1.213); Cartago (one per 536); Pococí (one for 1.313); and Perez Zeledon (one for 1.131).

Treatment of prisoners

The [United Nations](#) Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has adopted crucial revisions of the 60-year-old international standards on the treatment of prisoners. The Mandela Rules now contain an expanded section of basic principles, including the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The independence of healthcare staff is stipulated, and extensive restrictions are placed on disciplinary measures, including the prohibition of solitary confinement beyond 15 days. Clear and detailed instructions are provided on issues such as cell and body searches, registration and record keeping, investigations into deaths and complaints of torture and other ill-treatment, the needs of specific groups, independent inspections of prisons, the right to legal representation and more.

The United Nations' torture prevention body has urged [Guatemala](#) to improve the independent monitoring of detention conditions in the country as part of efforts to protect people deprived of their liberty against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The call came at the end of the first visit to Guatemala by the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT). "We hope, and expect, that the Government of Guatemala will use our report to improve conditions in which people may be deprived of their liberty and to guarantee the respect of all legal and procedural safeguards to persons deprived of liberty," said Felipe Villavicencio, who headed the delegation. The Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture highlighted the importance of Guatemala's national independent monitoring body, known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), fulfilling its mandate in accordance with Guatemala's treaty obligations and operating in a way which makes it a model of human rights and the rule of law.

The [US](#) Federal Bureau of Prisons is unable to provide a safe, cost-efficient and secure environment for elderly prisoners due to a lack of resources, staff and proper health facilities to accommodate the rapidly growing population, according to a report by the Department of Justice Inspector General. Prisoners aged 50 years and above are a rapidly growing part of the prison population and numbers have increased by 25 percent since 2009 — from 24,857 to 30,962, according to the report. During the same period, the population of prisoners aged 49 and younger decreased by about 1 percent, the report states.

Prisons in [Singapore](#) are getting their first elderly-friendly cells - 17 in the Changi Prison Complex and six more across other prison institutions. These revamped cells will include features such as support railings, and large flush and shower activation buttons. The proportion and overall number of convicted prisoners aged above 60 continue to grow steadily. There were 126 such convicts in prison in 2006, just 1.1 percent of the total convicted penal population. These figures more than tripled last year, with 418 people aged above 60 making up 4.3 percent of the prison population.

In New South Wales, [Australia](#), three prisoners are being crammed into one-man cells, self-harm has skyrocketed and prisoners wait more than a month to see a doctor, according to a snapshot of overcrowding in the states' jails that warned of potential prison riots. The report by the independent NSW Inspector of Custodial Services said prisoners are kept in cramped conditions for long periods where they "shower, eat and defecate" which "inevitably raises tensions in an already volatile population". It found prison infrastructure is inadequate and some prisoners go without proper health care. The state opposition described the miserable conditions as "inhumane". Higher arrest rates and tougher penalties have driven up the prison population over the past few years, and numbers are expected to increase further this year due to tough new bail laws.

Nearly 40 percent of juvenile offenders in [India](#) live in conditions "like or even worse than" adult prisons, according to a scathing judicial report that studied the state of children homes across the country. Criminal suspects or convicts below the age of 18, classified as children according to the law, are given a chance to reform themselves. The country's juvenile justice act mandates they be kept in special homes, and not adult prisons, where they will be able to go through a rehabilitation process. However, a Supreme Court committee said nearly 40 percent of the children in government-run homes live in "deplorable" conditions for which no one is being held accountable. Not enough resources are being provided to run these homes in a child-friendly manner and many of the homes are like or worse than prison for adults, the report said.

More than 30 prisoners cut their forearms in a self-harm protest at a maximum security penal colony in [Russia](#)'s Far East Amur region, according to the local branch of the prison service. Thirty-two prisoners "made insignificant cuts" to their forearms during a "riot" at the Vozhayevka village's Correctional Facility No. 2, the statement said. Russian media reports suggested that the number was much higher. A man claiming to be a prisoner at the colony told a news website in a phone call that 100 prisoners had cut their arms and were refusing to obey orders to bandage themselves, prompting the prison staff to call in riot police. Self-harm is regularly resorted to by prisoners in Russian prisons as a form of protest

against conditions. Shortly afterwards fifteen [Russian](#) prisoners slashed their wrists on a train taking them to a prison colony in the remote far north of the country.

In a report on how [New Zealand](#) is implementing UN initiatives against inhuman treatment, the Committee Against Torture claimed prisons were overcrowded, had inadequate health services, and too much power to strip-search prisoners. The Committee also said the Government needed to keep a closer eye on privately run prisons, which it said were more violent than comparable public prisons. The Corrections Minister rejected the criticism, saying, "I don't know whether I agree with the assertions that they make based on the evidence that I've seen. I accept their right to make the points, but I don't accept that they are major problems in our prison system."

The number of black prisoners sent to solitary confinement in federal prisons has doubled in the last decade, according to new figures that have prompted [Canada's](#) Correctional Investigator to declare the use of solitary "out of control." At a time when much of the Western world is tapering segregation use over health and cost concerns, the new stats depict a Canadian system in which one in two prisoners has spent some portion of their sentence in solitary. Overall, admissions to solitary – termed administrative segregation within the federal system – increased by 9 percent between March 31, 2005, and March 31, 2015, an upsurge that roughly parallels the 13.6-per-cent growth in the general prison population over the same time period. But beneath that gradual trend are far more dramatic surges for specific cohorts of the prison population. While the black population in federal custody grew by 77.5 per cent over the decade, the number of black prisoners sent to solitary went up by 100.4 per cent. For that same 10-year period, aboriginal admissions to solitary increased 31.1 per cent and female admissions increased 35 per cent, rates that roughly tracked prison population surges in both these groups. Segregation admissions for Caucasian prisoners, meanwhile, declined by 12.3 per cent.

Almost one in 10 of [Ireland's](#) youngest prisoners are in "restricted" regimes which see them locked up for up to 23 hours daily. Department of Justice figures show there were 212 prisoners under the age of 21 in jails as of April 30. Of those, 47 were 18 or younger. The Justice Minister was asked how many prisoners under 21 were on "restricted" regimes, as well as the number of hours each day they were in lock-up. She said 19 of the 212 were on a restricted regime, including one 17-year-old and two 18-year-olds. Ms Fitzgerald said there were three prisoners in lock-up for 23 hours a day, another three in for 22 hours a day, and a further three in for 20 hours. Nine were segregated for 20 hours, and one for 19 hours. She said the restriction of a prisoner's regime could occur due to a number of factors including the protection of vulnerable prisoners.

After appeals by prisoners serving time in the maximum security unit of [Costa Rica's](#) La Reforma Prison, the country's Constitutional Court has ordered that better mattresses be provided for conjugal visits. Prisoners had complained that mattresses used in a special area of the prison provided for conjugal visits were unhygienic and decrepit. The Court ordered the Justice Ministry to provide adequate mattresses within a period of three months. Prisoners are allowed one four-hour conjugal visit every fifteen days.

Prison violence

A fight involving around 100 prisoners at a prison facility for those suffering from tuberculosis in the Nizhny Novgorod region of [Russia](#) left one person dead and more than 20 injured. The prisoners lit two fires, and broke some of the facility's furniture and security cameras, according to prison officials. A prisoner who was involved in the fight died as doctors attempted to treat his injuries. Fifteen other prisoners were hospitalized, eight of whom were in a serious condition. Prison officials later met with the prisoners, who reportedly demanded that the conditions of their detention be more lenient. A few weeks later another riot broke out in a maximum-security prison in the [Russian](#) republic of Bashkortostan which left six prisoners hospitalized with injuries. Days later the same [Russian](#) prisoners rioted again, in protest at the investigation into the first riot.

After a riot broke out in an [Iraqi](#) prison, up to 50 prisoners and 12 police officers were killed and dozens escaped, including several convicted terrorists. The breakout at the prison in Al-Khalis, around 50 miles northeast of Baghdad, reportedly began when prisoners disarmed a warden who had gone to break up a fight. The prisoners killed the warden, then seized control of the armoury. Officials said 14 police officers were wounded during both the violence and an overnight manhunt for the fugitives.

[Brazilian](#) authorities reported that nine prisoners were killed in a riot that hit a prison in the north-east of the country, with one of the dead having been decapitated during the violence. The uprising began during visiting hours in the Feira de Santana prison, in Bahía's second-largest city. Prisoners, armed with knives, held 49 family members captive - 41 women, seven children and a man - and demanded an audience with representatives of the local Human Rights Committee. All of the hostages were freed unharmed. The prison currently holds 1,497, more than double its capacity of 664. The Brazilian prison system is in crisis due to over-capacity, the actions of criminal gangs within facilities, lack of investment and corruption: problems common in the penal systems of many Latin American countries. Two weeks later, two prisoners were killed in a riot which broke out in an overcrowded prison in the [Brazilian](#) state of Minas Gerais, which was holding more than 820 prisoners in conditions designed for 290.

Over 200 prisoners rioted at Songkhla provincial prison in [Thailand](#), burning prison property and bedding, smashing glass windows and throwing stones and bricks at prison wardens. A dozen wardens and two prisoners were injured and were admitted to Songkhla hospital. An investigation revealed that the prisoners turned violent in protest at prison drug checks of their living quarters, and overcrowding. They said the living quarters, which were designed for 150 persons, were holding over 200.

Inmates demanding WiFi and cell phones rioted for several hours inside Roumieh Prison in [Lebanon](#), according to a security source. He said drug convicts orchestrated the riot to demand improved conditions in the prison's Block A. Top security officials were called in to oversee negotiations with the prisoners. Among their demands were access to communication technologies including internet and cell phones, the source said. The violence comes days after videos were leaked online showing members of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces torturing inmates in the prison. The source said investigations

concluded that inmates "benefited from the momentum created by the protests around the torture" to start Tuesday's riot.

In [Greece](#), two prisoners were killed and 21 others injured during fighting that broke out in an Athens prison. The violence erupted between Albanian and Pakistani groups of prisoners using improvised weapons in Korydallos prison in western Athens, according to a source close to the investigation. The reason for the dispute was unclear.

Five prison officers and seven prisoners were stabbed and beaten in a violent confrontation in Golden Grove Prison, [Trinidad & Tobago](#). Prison officers said they were ambushed by a group of prisoners brandishing makeshift weapons — sharpened tooth brushes and metal objects — who kicked, cuffed, and stabbed them hours after a search by officials uncovered a stash of contraband. The prisoners, however, claimed the prison officials attacked them. They alleged that a group of mostly Muslim prisoners were also beaten in the raid by officers the night before. The Commissioner of Prisons said he had launched an internal investigation into the incident and expected a preliminary report soon.

Prisoners at a maximum security facility in Ontario, [Canada](#), rioted, destroying meal hatch doors, cell doors, phones, duct work and garbage bins in a six-hour incident that was only resolved when a tactical team used pepper spray. The riot began when 45 prison prisoners in two separate units at the Central North Correctional Centre refused to be locked in their cells. A spokesman for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in Ontario said the "prisoner disturbance" is being investigated and that there was never any danger to public safety. No injuries to staff or prisoners have been reported.

Up to 300 prisoners at the Metropolitan remand centre at Ravenhall in the [Australian](#) state of Victoria rioted, breaking doors and setting fires. At the height of the riot, masked prisoners armed with sticks smashed windows, bashed doors and lit fires at the maximum security facility. The prisoners, who were reportedly angry about a Victoria-wide ban on smoking inside prisons, breached a secure inner perimeter, forcing 200 staff to evacuate. The disturbance was finally brought under control by riot police armed with batons and shields, dog squad units and critical incident officers with kevlar body armour, high-powered firearms and tear gas. In a statement, Corrections Victoria said several prisoners had been hurt and two staff members suffered minor injuries.

In Nebraska, [US](#), two prisoners were killed and sections of a maximum security state prison were engulfed in fire when a riot broke out. The incident began on a Sunday afternoon when prison guards attempted to break up a large gathering of prisoners in front of a housing unit, according to a spokesman for the Nebraska department of correctional services. Violence erupted and two staff members were assaulted and one prisoner was shot as the disturbances spread to multiple housing units at the prison and fires broke out and property was damaged. When staff restored order early on Monday they found two prisoners dead in one of the housing units.

Five [Argentine](#) guards have been sentenced to life in prison for beating to death a prisoner, after a trial that exposed the use of torture in the country's crowded jails, a humanitarian organisation said. The beating to death of 26-year-old Patricio Barros Cisneros in 2012

brought to light prison service problems in the province of Buenos Aires and led to the guards' convictions. Barros Cisneros's death also sparked an investigation into the heads of the prison service, who allegedly tried to cover up facts in the case. The Center for Legal Social Studies (CELS) hailed the sentence as a "historic" judgement against the prison service in Buenos Aires. In 2014 the province of Buenos Aires reached its highest number of detainees for 15 years, with 60% of prisoners being held without a court judgement, according to latest figures released by the organisation. It also reports an overcrowding level of about 70% at Buenos Aires prison.

Developments in rehabilitation

Cells in all [New Zealand](#) jails may soon be fitted out with phones and computers in a bid to boost prisoners' educational levels so that they can get jobs after their release. The Corrections Minister welcomed a controversial decision by prison operator Serco to put phones and computers into every standard cell in its new \$270 million jail for 960 men. Prisoners will use the phones to make pre-arranged calls to family members and services such as counselling, but they will not be able to receive calls and their outgoing calls will be monitored. They will use the computers for study, to book appointments and even to change their meal menus. "We believe that prisoners with access to this electronic learning tool are going to be more successful in increasing their education and skills. It is an advance I would like to see in all New Zealand prisons," the Minister said.

A total of 93 percent of businesses in [Malta](#) do not feel comfortable employing former prisoners, new research has found. The Home Affairs Minister said the study conducted by the University of Malta criminology department found that more than two thirds of prisoners who left the country's only prison in 2010 ended up back in prison; the figure for last year was 42 per cent. The study highlighted lack of employability as a major cause of reoffending. Parliamentary Secretary Ian Borg said Malta would be making use of funds from the European Social Fund to help with the reintegration of former prisoners.

Up to 220 [Canadian](#) federal prisoners will soon be trained to operate chainsaws. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is seeking a contractor certified to offer chainsaw safety courses at federal institutions in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The federal government has budgeted up to \$108,000 to offer the three-day courses, designed to prepare prisoners for the workforce after their release from prison. Often the CSC offers prisoners training in trades including cooking, vehicle repair, computer programming or cabinetry. This would be the first time prisoners would handle dangerous, gas-powered equipment such as chainsaws.

Sentencing and the law

The [Swiss](#) Parliament has decided to re-introduce short-term prison sentences to complement a system of suspended fines as part of efforts to tighten the penal system. Following approval by the House of Representatives, the Senate on Wednesday adopted a compromise limiting the suspended fines to 180 days, instead of 360 days. The reform of the criminal code also foresees the use of electronic bracelets under strict conditions

instead of jail terms and the right for courts to order the expulsion of criminal foreigners once they have served their jail terms.

Police and prosecutors in [Finland](#) have criticised a forthcoming law change which will make prison sentences more likely for repeat low-level offenders. From the start of next year, individuals who are handed a series of fines can be given a prison sentence if they fail to pay, or if they commit a further offence within a certain time frame. However, critics claim the reform will increase the workload of crime prevention authorities, and will cost the taxpayer 12.4 million euros every year. Police claim that the move will mean 25,000 crimes a year are no longer eligible to be dealt with by handing down a fine, and will instead incur the costs of a pre-investigation and court case. Meanwhile Finland's Prosecution Service said the changes will require a further 35 prosecutors to deal with the increased number of cases. Finland's Criminal Sanctions Agency has also estimated that the return of converted sentences will increase the daily prison population by at least 50 prisoners.

Life imprisonment for juveniles is now prohibited in [Georgia](#) with the introduction of a new Juvenile Justice Code. Under the new regulations, all criminal cases in Georgia involving minors will be handled by police officers, investigators, prosecutors and judges who specialise in juvenile offending. The main changes relate to youth offenders' criminal records and prison terms. According to the new law, youth offenders will now have a reduced pre-trial detention period from 60 to 40 days and a youth offender's conviction status will be removed as soon as their sentence period has finished.

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 amendment was approved by a 323-155 vote, but it must be submitted to a second round of voting at the chamber of deputies before being sent to the senate. 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.

Hundreds of children are being kept behind bars in [Cote d'Ivoire](#)'s overcrowded adult prisons waiting trial dates, due to the country's broken post-crisis criminal justice system. According to Ivorian law, the accused have 15 days to be charged before a judge, but this deadline is rarely enforced and many accused – among them young teenagers – are left on remand for months on end. Children are subject to prosecution in Cote d'Ivoire from the age of 10. Anyone under 13 years of age is supposed to be placed in special detention centres, but many teenagers are still entering the adult prison system due to a lack of space. Moreover, when the time comes to go on trial, children are put before the same judges as adults because there are no special minor-friendly courts in Cote d'Ivoire.

In an address to members of the judiciary in March last year, [Cambodian](#) Justice Minister Ang Vong Vanthana called for a "transparent and effective" approach to pre-trial detention, explaining that the days of simply ticking boxes when deciding whether to imprison a

suspect before trial were numbered. The minister's speech came two months after a new form, which senior judges had helped to produce, was distributed to all Cambodian courts. The form requires judges across the country to demonstrate that they have carefully considered all of the relevant facts before sending someone to pre-trial detention, in an effort to ensure that it is only used as a last resort. But, almost a year and a half later, judges still appear to be ignoring the new procedures, and government data indicate that pre-trial detention is, in fact, on the rise.

In the [US](#), a federal lawsuit in Virginia is threatening to upend the state's practice of automatically placing death row prisoners in near constant solitary confinement, and experts say it could spark similar challenges across the country to a prison practice that is increasingly being scrutinized. A US District judge in April rejected Virginia officials' bid to have the case thrown out in its early stages, noting that while other courts had ruled that such confinement for death row prisoners was constitutional, the time might be right for a reassessment. US District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema said the issue needed to "be looked at in the context of evolving and changing moral and legal standards," and she urged state officials to "give some serious thought" to this issue. "I do not understand why the commonwealth is insisting on maintaining this level of these conditions," Brinkema said. "They really need to be thought about carefully."

The [Cayman Islands](#) government has not made any budget allocation for the prison service to implement the requirement of the new conditional release law that was passed last October, as it is not expected to come into force any time soon. The legislation was meant to pave the way for the structured rehabilitation of offenders before they are released and to provide for specified minimum tariffs for those serving mandatory life sentences. But the premier, who has responsibility for the prison budget as minister for home affairs, said that the regulations are far from ready as legal drafters struggle with a heavy workload.

A Special Parliamentary Commission has delivered a damning report on the courts in [Albania](#), saying corruption is widespread at all levels. The report says judges pay between €100,000 to €300,000 to the High Council of Justice, the body that nominates judges, to get their posts, or to move to better positions within the system. It is the first time that an official report has given credibility to reports of judges paying huge bribes to move from courts in poor areas to urban centres where the economy is more developed and the potential to collect bribes from people awaiting justice is correspondingly higher. The High Court of Justice, headed by the country's President, has faced criticism in the past for botched administrative investigations and for failing to punish judges accused for wrongdoings. The report states that corruption is seen a "normal" way to deliver justice at all levels of the system, from police to prosecutors and judges.

Prison policy

In the [US](#), New York City lawmakers are pushing for the creation of a Bill of Rights for all prisoners in efforts to curb violence and abuse in the prison system, according to media reports. Currently, prisoners in New York are all given a list of rules when they enter the prison – a lengthy document of over 100 regulations that often confuses detainees. If they break any of these rules they can go immediately into solitary confinement for weeks,

considered a form of psychological torture. The new bill would require officers to read a list of rights to all new detainees, and a clear code of conduct would be outlined so that prisoners would understand the exact repercussions of their actions if they violate the rules. The bill comes with a list of 11 other proposals by the New York city council to better monitor prison activity and curb the violence inside. These include collecting data on a range of issues such as detailed demographics of prisoners, use of force by staff, and visitation practices.

Also in the [US](#), a new study has found that prisoners in private prisons are likely to serve as many as two to three more months behind bars than those assigned to public prisons and are equally likely to reoffend after release, despite industry claims to lower recidivism rates through high-quality and innovative rehabilitation programs. The study is believed to be the first to compare time served in public and private prisons. Anita Mukherjee of the University of Wisconsin reviewed data from private prisons in Mississippi between 1996 and 2004. Private prisons accounted for about 40 percent of all prison beds in Mississippi in 2012 and the state had the second highest incarceration rate in the country. States typically contract private prison operators to save money and expand bed capacity. In Mississippi, state law requires private prisons to provide a cost saving of at least 10 percent compared to public facilities. The research found that prisoners in private facilities had an increased sentence length of four to seven percent, which equalled 60 to 90 days for the average prisoner. With the average contractual payment to private prison operators in Mississippi being \$50 for each bed occupied, an extra 60 days added to a prisoner's sentence leads to an average additional cost per prisoner of about \$3,000. That added expense erodes about half of the projected cost savings offered by private prisons in the state.

The [Netherlands](#) paid €29m in compensation and legal costs last year to people who were wrongly jailed, three times the total 10 years ago. Last year 6,100 former suspects were given financial compensation for time spent in jail ahead of or during the legal process. Their compensation accounted for €11m of the bill. The rest went on legal fees, travel costs and lost income claims, according to a newspaper report. The rise is due to the speed with which the Netherlands places suspects in custody, according to criminal lawyer Geertjan van Oosten. "Dutch judges are too quick to take such a decision," he said. "Sometimes they deal with 20 to 30 cases in a morning sitting, and that means just a couple of minutes per case." Almost half the people who end up on trial in the Netherlands spend time in custody ahead of their case being heard.

A member of parliament for the ruling United [Russia](#) party has drafted a bill to allow enterprises to employ thousands of prisoners as a cheap workforce to build the infrastructure for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The legal amendments create a mechanism for companies to use prisoners as labourers on work sites hundreds of kilometres from where they are imprisoned. Any type of enterprise - state, private, or public - can employ prisoners facing compulsory correctional labour or serving time in penal colony settlements - facilities used to isolate prisoners typically convicted of less severe crimes.

Transgender prisoners jailed in Rio de Janeiro's penitentiaries will be able to choose whether they want to be sent to a prison for men or women, a first for [Brazil](#). The new rules were approved by the state of Rio de Janeiro's department of prisons. "It is treatment with

dignity. It shows respect for this population," the head of the state prison system was quoted as saying. The changes - sought since 2001 by LGBT groups - are expected to benefit 700 of the 43,000 prisoners in the state of Rio.

Around 64 percent of positions in the [Namibian](#) Correctional Services (NCS) are unfilled because of a shortage of finances, according to the Deputy Commissioner, who added "We have a total of 4,209 correctional officer and 112 staff member positions that are unfilled since 2014." Among key positions that are vacant at the NCS, the Commissioner said, are those for medical officers, registered nurses, counsellors, clinical psychologists, case management officers, education officers, vocational trainers, religious care officers, occupational therapists, rehabilitation specialists and psychiatric nurses.

Cowra, [Australia](#), is the site of exploratory research that is testing how Justice Reinvestment could be adopted as a possible policy approach. Justice Reinvestment aims to address the underlying causes of crime and improve the lives of both individuals and communities. It uses data to identify communities that have high concentrations of offenders and to assess the particular problems facing those communities. The redirection of funds into early intervention, crime prevention and diversionary programs creates savings in the criminal justice system that can be reinvested in those communities. The Cowra community, together with Australian National University researchers, held a Justice Reinvestment Forum at which participants reflected on the money that had been spent on incarcerating their own citizens over the past ten years. They also deliberated on the crimes that could be amenable to a Justice Reinvestment approach. They then engaged in a process to decide how monies that had been spent on incarcerating Cowra citizens could be better spent on prevention, early intervention or other services within the community.

[Morocco](#)'s High Delegation of Corrections (DOC) has announced plans to open ten new prisons in 2015 to accommodate 13,000 prisoners. These projects are part of a larger strategy that aims to build 37 new prisons and correctional facilities by 2018 to accommodate up to 45,000 prisoners. Despite efforts to counter overpopulation in Moroccan prisons, many human rights organizations have denounced the "bad and inhumane" conditions in the already existing correctional facilities, especially those located in Laayoune, Fez, and Dakhla.

[Ghanaian](#) President John Dramani Mahama 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 and prison officers.

The [Thai](#) Justice Ministry has ordered the overhaul of the family-visitation system at 143 prisons across the country. The overhaul follows complaints by relatives about poor service and unfriendly guards and prison officials. Under the revamp, the number of toilets, visiting rooms and parking areas would be increased to accommodate a larger number of visitors. Prison services would also be improved in line with the justice minister's policy to treat

people equally and correct a negative image of prison staff, according to the department's director-general. He added, "What relatives are facing are rude manners by prison officials, overpriced goods at prison shops, inadequate toilets and overcrowded visiting rooms. These problems are being tackled."

Corrections officers in high security prisons in [New Zealand](#) will be fitted with body-mounted cameras as a "de-escalating tool". A thousand of the cameras are being rolled out to high-security prisons around New Zealand after successful trials last year at the Auckland and Rimutaka prisons. The proactive use of the device as a "de-escalating tool" is a world first - in foreign jails, the record button is hit only once full-scale violence has erupted. "We've found the majority of the time the prisoner will just walk away when that button's pushed," the programme manager said.

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