



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

36th Edition – November - December 2016

Welcome to the 36th edition of the International Prison News Digest, our selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. The Digest is produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 November- 31 December 2016.

In this and future editions of the Digest, we are grouping news items regionally, rather than thematically. We aim in the Digest to cover all regions of the world and include new developments in policy and practice, as well as information from official and intergovernmental bodies. By clicking on the hyperlinks, you can access the news articles in their original form.

Content is sourced solely from English language news stories. Readers wishing to notify us of important news items in other languages are welcome to send us articles with a short summary of key content and we will consider them for inclusion in the next edition. Please note that ICPR is not responsible for the accuracy of external content.

Information on global prison systems can be found on [World Prison Brief](#)

AFRICA

Congo: Three people died and four suffered bullet injuries during a short-lived mutiny at a jail in Congo's capital Brazzaville. [Daily Nation, 30 December 2016](#)

Malawi: The Malawian President has pardoned 644 prisoners in the country's overcrowded jails under an amnesty to mark Christmas and New Year Celebrations. [All Africa, 22 December 2016](#)

Senegal: Overcrowded prisons, poor conditions and long pre-trial detention periods have led to prisoner protests and calls for reform. [VOA News, 11 November 2016](#)

Seychelles: More than 150 prisoners have been released after their drug sentences were reviewed, the Seychelles' judiciary officials have said. [Seychelles News Agency, 18 November 2016](#)

South Africa: Authorities at Pollsmoor Prison are battling chronic overcrowding, with over 8,900 prisoners held in a facility built to accommodate 3,900. [IOL News, 1 November 2016](#)

South Africa: Western Cape High Court Judge Vincent Saldanha has declared the conditions at Pollsmoor Prison's remand detention facility unconstitutional in what has been hailed a historic victory for awaiting-trial prisoners. [IOL, 5 December 2016](#)

South Africa: Three people were killed and a further 26 injured in a clash between prisoners and wardens at the St Albans Prison in Nelson Mandela Bay. [News 24, 26 December 2016](#)

Uganda: In a bid to improve the administration of justice in Uganda, the Chief Justice has granted 29 senior prisons officers judicial powers to remand and grant suspects bail. [New Vision, 6 December 2016](#)

AMERICAS

Belize: The Court of Appeal has ruled that a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole can no longer be given to convicted persons. [7NewsBelize, 4 November 2016](#)

Bermuda: The national security minister noted that Bermuda's recidivism rate was falling and at an "all-time low", describing it as a measure of the success of prison rehabilitation programmes. [The Royal Gazette, 16 November 2016](#)

Bolivia: A new report details some of the problems facing Bolivia's prison system, and examines some of the challenges policy makers have confronted in their efforts to reform it. [Insight Crime, 17 November 2016](#)

Brazil: The Brazilian federal government has announced that it will disburse R\$1.2 billion for the construction of new prisons and the modernization of the penal system. [The Rio Times, 29 December 2016](#)

Canada: The Trudeau government intends to cut the widespread use of mandatory minimum sentences by giving judges back their discretion over punishment. [The Globe and Mail, 1 November 2016](#)

Canada: Indigenous prisoners are less likely to be released on parole and when they do finally get out they're more often being released into the community from a maximum or medium security institution. [APTN News, 29 November 2016](#)

Canada: A separate system for sentencing aboriginal offenders might be the key to dealing with the disproportionate number of indigenous people behind bars, suggests a federally commissioned study. [iPolitics, 11 December 2016](#)

Canada: A riot involving 185 prisoners at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert left one prisoner dead, eight prisoners injured and a large part of the institution uninhabitable. [Global News, 16 December 2016](#)

Cayman Islands: A group of men serving life sentences in HMP Northward may mount a legal challenge to the introduction of a minimum tariff for prisoners serving life sentences under the Conditional Release Law. [Cayman News Service, 5 December 2016](#)

Colombia: A report by Colombia's Comptroller General details the state's failure to control runaway overcrowding in prisons despite major investments. [Insight Crime, 29 November 2016](#)

Cuba: Cuba has pardoned 787 prisoners in response to Pope Francis's call for world leaders to show mercy to prisoners, authorities said. [RTE, 15 November 2016](#)

Guyana: Guyana says it will expand a jungle prison to house violent convicts and ease overcrowding at a city prison where 17 prisoners died in riots earlier this year. [Daily Magazine, 13 December 2016](#)

Mexico: More than \$2 million was reportedly diverted from Mexico's 2014 federal penitentiary budget by officials who used the money to acquire luxurious vehicles and flights. [Insight Crime, 1 November 2016](#)

St Kitts & Nevis: Construction will begin on a new prison in 2017, which will have better housing conditions and improve the rehabilitation prospects for prisoners. [Nation News, 7 December 2016](#)

United States: Washington State prisoners will no longer be called "offenders. Instead, the Department of Corrections will use terms such as "individual" and encourage staff to address prisoners by name. [OBP FM, 3 November 2016](#)

United States: While the use of solitary confinement in the US has been decreasing in recent years, there were at least 67,442 prisoners in the US locked in their cells for 22 or more hours a day in the fall of 2015. [Reason.com, 1 December 2016](#)

United States: A quarter of the US prison population, about 364,000 prisoners, could have been spared imprisonment without meaningfully threatening public safety or increasing crime, according to a new study. [The Guardian, 11 December 2016](#)

ASIA

India: Two major jailbreaks in a month have shone a spotlight on security in India's overcrowded and under-staffed prisons. [BBC News, 30 November 2016](#)

Japan: The Justice Ministry is considering reviewing the treatment of prisoners to place a greater emphasis on rehabilitation, according to a government source. [The Japan Times, 31 December 2016](#)

Kazakhstan: As the result of a campaign to humanise criminal legislation, the number of prisoners in Kazakhstan has fallen by 30 percent in five years. [Astana Times, 3 November 2016](#)

Kazakhstan: The Kazakh Parliament's lower chamber has approved a bill on an amnesty for some 30,000 people who are behind bars in the Central Asian nation. [Radio Free Europe, 7 December 2016](#)

Myanmar: Myanmar's government must seize the opportunity to break with its grim past where prisoners were subject to torture and appalling conditions by introducing key reforms that prison legislation in line with international human rights standards. [Amnesty International, 10 November 2016](#)

Nepal: The number of sexagenarian prisoners has reached 308, causing a burden for prison management in lack of proper care and support for them. [My Republica, 8 December 2016](#)

Pakistan: The federal ombudsman has proposed a committee, headed by a district and sessions judge, for every jail to bring about overall improvement in their condition. [The Nation, 14 December 2016](#)

Philippines: Children as young as 9 could be jailed in the Philippines for certain crimes under a proposed law backed by the president, sparking concern from the United Nations and rights groups. [Rappler, 21 November 2016](#)

Thailand: The new Thai King has granted amnesty or shortened the punishments of up to 150,000 prisoners, including those who were convicted of insulting the monarchy. [Newline, 14 December 2016](#)

Thailand: The Corrections Department has introduced full-body scanning technology for searching female prisoners following complaints over human rights violations during physical body searches. [Bangkok Post, 15 December 2016](#)

Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan must renounce torture, a UN body has said, accusing the country of systematic abuse, including rape and beating in jail, and political disappearances. [Reuters, 7 December 2016](#)

Vietnam: More than 4,200 prisoners have been given a chance to go home in an amnesty granted ahead of the country's New Year holiday. [Tuoi Tre News, 30 November 2016](#)

EUROPE

Belgium: The Council of Europe's committee on torture prevention has described detention conditions it observed in Belgian prisons during months-long strikes by staff as intolerable. [Sputnik News, 18 November 2016](#)

Cyprus: Ways must be found to address the problem of overcrowding in the central prison which has 100 prisoners more than the facility can house, the House human rights committee has warned. [Cyprus Mail, 28 November 2016](#)

Czech Republic: The Czech judiciary is planning to put into practice the concept of a minimum-security prison after the Norwegian model that has attracted international attention. [Radio Praha, 22 November 2016](#)

Czech Republic: Prisoners in the prison in Jirice will help breed sheep and fallow deer in the first project of its kind in Europe. [Prague Daily Monitor, 30 November 2016](#)

Denmark: Danish researchers are developing boardgames that can help strengthen the relationship between children and their fathers who are in prison. [CPH Post, 9 December 2016](#)

France: The conditions in a major French prison constitute inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners, the country's official prisons watchdog reported. [RFI, 14 December 2016](#)

Georgia: Georgia is planning to build a new juvenile detention facility for young offenders aged 14-21 years, through the recommendation and support of the European Union (EU). [Agenda.Ge, 24 November 2016](#)

Georgia: Georgia's Minister of Justice Thea Tsulukiani says this year more juveniles were offered preventative sentences rather than prison terms. [Agenda.ge, 28 November 2016](#)

Georgia: Georgia's Constitutional Court has struck down a law which sent many young people to prison for using marijuana. [Democracy & Freedom Watch, 26 December 2016](#)

Ireland: There have been calls for the Government to take a fresh look at the effectiveness of sending people to prison after a new report showed almost half of prisoners had re-offended within three years. [Irish Examiner, 10 November 2016](#)

Ireland: Judges are ignoring legislation stipulating criminals convicted of commercial-scale drug dealing must be jailed for a minimum of 10 years unless there are exceptional circumstances. [The Irish Times, 28 November 2016](#)

Ireland: A private member's bill to ban the use of solitary confinement in Irish prisons for more than 15 consecutive days has been referred to the Oireachtas justice committee. [Irish Legal News, 2 December 2016](#)

Ireland: The number of people being jailed for failing to pay court fines has fallen by around 1,000 following the introduction of laws aimed at effectively eliminating the sanction. [Irish Examiner, 3 December 2016](#)

Malta: Prisoners at the Corradino Correctional Facility are to receive a reduction of 30 days from their jail-time, after the Pope sent a request to President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca to mark the Year of Mercy. [Independent.mt, 30 November 2016](#)

Poland: Poland's top court has said that key rules allowing the most dangerous criminals to be detained in a special facility after serving a jail sentence are constitutional. [Radio Poland, 23 November 2016](#)

Romania: Romania's Justice Ministry wants to reduce prison sentences by 10 percent as compensation for the improper detention conditions in local penitentiaries. [Romania-Insider, 4 November 2016](#)

Russia: The Constitutional Court of Russia has published a regulation that allows prisoners sentenced to life to receive at least one long visit from close relatives in the first 10 years of their prison term. [RAPSJ, 17 November 2016](#)

Russia: Russian lawmakers are considering a bill that would allow prisoners with young children to go home during school vacations, among other measures softening their punishment. [RT, 8 December 2016](#)

Turkey: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled that Turkey breached an applicant's right to respect for private and family life after prison authorities failed to secure the confidentiality of a letter sent by the applicant to her lawyer. [Hurriyet Daily News, 13 December 2016](#)

United Kingdom

England and Wales: All new justices of the peace (JPs) should be required to visit a prison as an essential part of their training for sitting on the bench, the Magistrates Association has said. [The Guardian, 1 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: The Government has announced funding for an extra 2,500 prison officers as those working on the front line warn the safety of jails is threatened by falling staff numbers and cuts. [Independent, 3 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: The Prison Service is to launch an investigation after a riot at Bedford Prison which reportedly saw up to 200 prisoners go on the rampage. [The Guardian, 7 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: Frontline prison officer numbers have fallen by more than a quarter in six and a half years, figures reveal. [AOL, 10 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: Almost half of boys held in youth offender institutions are from a black or minority ethnic background, surveys conducted by a watchdog indicate. [North West Evening Mail, 15 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: People from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be jailed for some crimes than those who are white, according to a government-commissioned report. [The Guardian, 16 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: UK prisoners are to get training to become entrepreneurs in the first ever programme of its kind, led by the Centre for Entrepreneurs (CfE). [Startups.co.uk, 28 November 2016](#)

England and Wales: Teenage criminals will be sent to “secure schools”, instead of prison, where they will be taught English and Maths lessons. [The Telegraph, 11 December 2016](#)

England and Wales: Rioting prisoners took over four wings over of HMP Birmingham, setting fire to stairwells, destroying paper records and causing £2m in damage. [BBC News, 22 December 2016](#)

England and Wales: Businesses who employ ex-offenders should be rewarded with tax cuts, a committee of MPs has said. [The Telegraph, 19 December 2016](#)

Isle of Man: A scheme which aims to stop young offenders from repeating their crimes could be extended to include older people. [Energy FM, 20 December 2016](#)

Northern Ireland: Stormont ministers have launched a review of how vulnerable prisoners are monitored in prisons following recent suicides and self-harm incidents. [The Irish News, 22 November 2016](#)

Scotland: Transferring healthcare for prisoners from the Scottish Prison Service to the NHS has not improved health outcomes, according to a new report from Scotland’s nursing body. [Holyrood Magazine, 25 November 2016](#)

Scotland: The new National Strategy for Criminal Justice says people released from Scottish prisons should no longer be referred to as “offenders” but as a “person with convictions” or “person with an offending history”. [BBC News, 25 November 2016](#)

OCEANIA

Australia: Legal changes driven by public outcry over high profile cases have driven an almost 70 per cent increase in Victoria's prison population in the past decade, despite only a small increase in the crime rate. [The Courier, 3 November 2016](#)

Australia: A confidential report reveals Australia's newest and biggest prison was poorly designed and is not fit to house its high number of indigenous prisoners. [Sky News, 23 November 2016](#)

Australia: Australia's prime minister says the government has enacted a law that will allow officials to keep convicted terrorists in prison after they have served their sentences. [The Telegraph, 2 December 2016](#)

Australia: Western Australia's prisons are overcrowded and prisoners are in cells which are not up to national or international standards, a review has found. [News.com.au, 19 December 2016](#)

New Zealand: A man who grabbed a female prison guard's bottom has become the first person to be jailed for the maximum term under the three strikes law but may not serve all of his seven-year sentence. [NZ City, 24 November 2016](#)

New Zealand: A prisoner surge across New Zealand prisons has meant more double-bunking, longer daily lockdowns and the re-employment of redundant former staff, the Corrections Association says. [Stuff.co.nz, 5 December 2016](#)

New Zealand: New Zealand prisoners have been subjected to degrading treatment, including being filmed while strip searched, being bullied and victimised by other prisoners, and sleeping in "deplorable" accommodation, a watchdog has found. [Otago Daily Times, 8 December 2016](#)

New Zealand: Prisoners held too long in custody can sue the Corrections Department for compensation, a judge has ruled. [Stuff.co.nz, 15 December 2016](#)