



International Centre for Prison Studies

ICPS NEWS DIGEST

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Welcome to the fourth edition of the ICPS News Digest, a selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. The articles have mainly been selected for their relevance to current debates in the UK. The Digest will be produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 July – 31st August 2011. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

Prison populations

On 21 July ICPS published the 9th edition of the [World Prison Population List](#) (WPPL 9), by Roy Walmsley, Director of ICPS' World Prison Brief. WPPL 9 shows that more than 10.1 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world. This is an increase of 300,000 since the previous edition two and a half years ago. If those known to be held in 'detention centres' in China are included the total is over 10.75 million. WPPL 9 provides up-to-date information on the global prison population and the rate per 100,000 of the national population (the prison population rate) in 218 countries and territories.

The number of people in prison continues to cause problems, with many countries looking for ways to ease overcrowding. The Presidents of [Kyrgyzstan](#) and [Tajikistan](#) have signed amnesty decrees to release thousands of prisoners in connection with the upcoming 20th anniversary of those countries' independence from the Soviet Union. The President of [Vietnam](#) has selected the categories of prisoners who will be given an amnesty to mark the country's national day on 2nd September, while the President of the [Maldives](#) has pardoned up to 340 prisoners on the occasion of the country's Independence Day.

As part of an initiative in [United Arab Emirates](#) to repatriate 50 insolvent Dubai prisoners a month for a year, Pure Gold Jewellers have signed an agreement with the Al Faraj Relief Fund (an affiliate of the Interior Ministry) whereby it will pay for the air tickets of the released prisoners and additionally, on a case by case basis and per the approval of the Relief Fund, will also pay off their debts amounting up to Dhs40,000 per person. In the last three months the retailer has managed to release 700 prisoners from various prisons in the UAE.

Other countries are building more prisons to reduce overcrowding. In [Algeria](#) the Justice Minister has announced that 81 new penitentiary centres will be constructed by the end of 2012, while in [Ireland](#) two new prisons are planned as the Government revealed that prison numbers could jump by 50% over the next five years. The [Irish](#) Justice Minister is also considering releasing long term prisoners early as way of controlling overcrowding. In [Fiji](#) the Corrections Service is building two new remand centres after it was revealed that the three major correctional facilities in the country are overcrowded, in [Switzerland](#) a new wing has been inaugurated in the Champ-Dollon prison, and a new prison will open in [Iceland](#) in 2014. [Colombia](#)'s Minister of the Interior has announced that five new prisons will be build in the country allowing the justice system to hold 25,000 more prisoners, while Belgium has signed a contract with a property investment group for a 100 million Euro project to build and maintain a new prison in the country. By 2016 Belgium plans to have built four new prisons. In [Indonesia](#) the Law and Human Rights Ministry announced its target to complete the renovation of at least six buildings to be used as new prisons by the end of the year, saying that the new facilities would help to resolve the ongoing problems of prisons operating beyond their capacity, which frequently leads to fights among prisoners.

The new [Venezuelan](#) Minister of Correctional Services has put a hold on the admission of prisoners to the country's prisons, with the exception of "highly dangerous prisoners," claiming that the move is necessary to cut down on overcrowding in Venezuela's prison system. However the decision has meant that [holding](#) cells in Venezuelan police stations are filling up, with many local police forces running out of room in the cells. The [Minister](#) has also announced that she will take steps to reclassify prisoners according to the crimes they have committed, to process prisoners more quickly and to shorten the time it takes to review individual cases. In Dunkirk, [France](#), the public prosecutor is refusing to send some convicted prisoners to jail because the local prison is overcrowded, saying he does not want to see prisoners sleeping on the floor. Those convicted of serious offences are still sent to the prison but others are freed until there is room in the prison.

In the state of Connecticut, [US](#), hundreds of state prisoners have to sleep on floors in makeshift places including gymnasiums and closets because of overcrowding.

In [Hungary](#) the prison population has increased by 9% compared to the previous year, causing the prison occupancy rate to rise to 138%, while in the [Czech Republic](#) there are now an estimated 23,200 prisoners – several thousand more than the official number of beds – leading authorities to create temporary cells out of office space, storage rooms and lounges.

In [Nigeria](#) the Comptroller General of Prisons in Akwa Ibom State has condemned the large number of prisoners still awaiting trial, saying that it is frustrating efforts to reform the prisoners. He noted that out of an estimated 48,000 prisoners in the state, 34,000 were still awaiting trial. In [South Africa](#) the majority of prisoners, including those awaiting trial, are there mainly because they cannot afford to pay bail money, a situation which contributes greatly to the overcrowding in the country's prisons. In [Australia](#) a 128% increase in the number of prisoners aged 65 or over in the period 2000 – 2010 has caused problems for prison authorities. The study indicates that the cost of accommodating older prisoners was some three times greater than their younger counterparts with prison health services likely to experience increased requirements for specialist services and chronic disease management services. Also in [Australia](#) in New South Wales the juvenile prisons are being filled to record levels, with up to 400 children in custody on any given day, a 60 per cent increase since 2004.

In a small number of countries the prison population is decreasing. Official statistics for [Scotland](#) show that the annual daily average prison population was 7,853, down 1% on the previous year. The Scottish government has said that despite the drop the prison population still remains very high. The latest statistics from the [Australian](#) Bureau of Statistics show that the overall prison population in the country is 4% less than the previous year. However criminologists caution that while this is a welcome development it must be seen in the context of the prison population rate which has risen relentlessly since the mid-eighties, from a rate of 86 per 100,000 of the general population in 1984 to 165 in 2011. The prison population is also falling in the [Netherlands](#), from an average of 14,108 people in prison in 2005 to just over 11,000 in 2009. The Justice Ministry estimates that the numbers will continue to fall, and will average 8,875 by 2015.

Changes in prison population levels – report by Roy Walmsley, Director of the [World Prison Brief](#)

Although prison populations are rising in every continent, particularly notable rises have occurred in recent years in Georgia, Turkey and Venezuela; in each country the prison population doubled between 2006 and 2010.

Russia has had the highest prison population rate in Europe at least since the collapse of the Soviet Union 20 years ago, but its numbers have been coming down steadily (rate was 559 per 100,000 at 1 July) and Georgia's are still rising (547 at 30 April); Georgia is thus on

course to overtake Russia as the European country that imprisons the highest proportion of its citizens.

Turkey's prison population has continued to rise this year and its rate of 168 per 100,000 of the national population at the end of April makes it the highest of European countries that were not part of the former socialist bloc. Spain is the next highest (156 at the end of July) but after reaching a peak of 167 in the middle of last year the rate has been steadily coming down.

European countries with steadily reducing prison populations include Estonia, Moldova and the Netherlands.

In South America Venezuela is not the only country to register a notable increase. The total in Brazil is now almost 500,000, a rate of 253 per 100,000; the rate has been rising by some 10 points a year since 2002. The highest rate in South America is that of Chile (303) and Uruguay and Guyana also have rates higher than Brazil's.

The United States has had the highest rate in the world since 2001, a rate that continued to rise until 2007 when it reached 758 per 100,000. Since then it has turned and the latest available figures (for 2009) put it at 743. It remains at just over five times the world average of 146.

Kazakhstan continues to have the highest rate in Asia (351 per 100,000) but this represents a substantial fall during the last seven years; between 1995 and 2003 its rate was over 500. South-central Asia (mainly the Indian sub-continent) has some of the lowest rates in the world, with Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan all having rates below 45.

It has at last been possible to obtain a figure for Bhutan, one of the half dozen countries in the world whose prison population level had not been available. Its rate of 135 per 100,000 of the national population is similar to that of another South-central Asian country Sri Lanka, but over three times the rate in its four other neighbours who were listed in the paragraph above.

Ethiopia is another country for which available figures had been sparse but for which they have just been tracked down. The Central Statistics Agency there reports a prison population total of over 112,000 for the year 2009-10, which is 30% higher than the level in the previous year and a rate of 136 per 100,000.

Drugs

The findings of a preliminary study of 150 former addicts in a prison in [Malaysia](#) showed that those prisoners on methadone therapy are four times less likely to commit crime on release than those without any treatment.

In [Australia](#) a report has concluded that prison populations across the country could be cut if more heroin-addicted prisoners were helped to stay on methadone treatment programmes after being released from prison. In [Canberra](#), Australia, negotiations about a proposed needle exchange programme at the Alexander Maconochie Centre have reached a stalemate, with the Public Health Association recommending the programme but prison staff opposing it as they do not want to be complicit in illegal activity.

In [Greece](#) the government is preparing a Bill whereby drug addicts who are arrested or those serving time in prison for drug related offences would be given incentives to join rehabilitation schemes. The proposals include authorities temporarily suspending arrest warrants, prosecutions, trials and prison sentences for addicts. For those who complete the schemes and are deemed to have kicked the habit, authorities will drop all charges and permanently suspend any sentence they were carrying out. In [New Zealand](#) the Government is doubling the number of places within prison drug treatment units, recognising that drugs and alcohol are major drivers of crime in the country.

The Supreme Court in [Colombia](#) has ruled that carrying small doses of drugs is not a punishable offence. The Court has set the personal amount of drugs at 20 grams of marijuana and one gram of cocaine.

Health

Many countries continue to struggle to provide proper healthcare in prisons. In [Jamaica](#) prisoners with HIV/AIDS held in maximum security prisons claim that their medical and nutritional needs are being neglected, while in the [Philippines](#) 3 to 4 prisoners die each month in the New Bilibid Prison hospital. Staff at the hospital explained that this is due to some patients being brought to them in advanced stages of disease, and this, compounded by the congestion in the prison and the less than ideal hospital conditions, results in the deaths. The hospital is often without water, infectious diseases are quick to spread and the hospital doctors are not fully trained to handle the medical equipment such as X-ray and ultrasound machines. In Victoria, [Australia](#), the Ombudsman has criticised the level of health care provided to Victorian prisoners, finding that many prisoners are not receiving adequate treatment for Hepatitis C, mental health problems or drug dependence. However it has also been [announced](#) that prisoners in the state will have access to condoms and dental dams to combat sexually transmitted diseases in custody.

Also in [Australia](#) a disability advocacy group says at least seven Indigenous people who are severely mentally impaired are being held in maximum security prisons in the Northern Territory because there is nowhere else for them. They are being held under legislation introduced in 2002 which allows mentally ill people to be locked up indefinitely under custodial supervision orders. The Territory's Attorney General has reported that a secure mental health facility is being built as part of the new Darwin prison precinct, on which construction is due to start next year, and that amendments to the Criminal Code will soon

allow a court to make custodial supervision orders committing persons with mental impairment to places other than a prison.

In [Sweden](#) the number of prisoners receiving Ritalin for the treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) increased by 30% last year, with estimates indicating that around 25% of the Swedish prison population may suffer from ADHD. An ex-prisoners organisation has criticised the increase use, saying that giving high doses of stimulants to people who have been struggling with an amphetamine addiction is just replacing one drug with another, and that a more restrictive approach should be looked at.

In [Ireland](#) there has been a year on year increase in the number of people diverted from criminal justice to community treatment settings as a result of a new prison screening service for mental illness. The role of the Prison Inreach and Court Liaison Service developed at Cloverhill Prison is to screen and identify people with mental illness who are about to enter a remand setting.

A study published in the Medical Journal of [Australia](#) concludes that more prisoners in Australia die in the year after they are released than the annual number of deaths in custody. A disproportionate number of these died within the first four weeks of their release.

Treatment of prisoners

The conditions in which prisoners are held, and the treatment they receive in prisons around the world continue to be a source of great concern. A report on prisons in [Uganda](#) revealed that prisoners are subject to brutal compulsory labour, frequent violence, miserable overcrowding and disease. In [Jordan](#) the Chairman of the Arab Center for Human Rights and Development visited Juweideh Correctional and Rehabilitation Center and reported that there were cracks in the ceiling, the dormitories smelled very bad due to lack of drainage and a proper sewage system and the beds and blankets were not fit for human use. Prisoners were made to undress in front of each other and some of the prisoners showed obvious signs of torture.

An article on prison conditions in [Greece](#) reports that prison establishments in the country are vastly overcrowded and material conditions are deplorable. Healthcare provision is minimal and the prevalence of serious transmissible diseases and mental disorders is high, as are the rates of self-harm suicide and death more generally.

In [India](#) the Union Home Ministry has criticised prison authorities across the country for the conditions in prisons, and for the first time has written to them in this regard seeking a compliance report from them. The move has been initiated to monitor overcrowding and unhealthy practices in the prisons.

A former prisoner in [South Korea](#) has filed a lawsuit demanding 30 million won in compensation from the state for the conditions in which he was held at the Busan Detention Center where he was held in a cell measuring 8.64 square metres which he shared with four to six other people. Under these conditions the prisoners had to sleep on their sides to avoid touching the next person and were unable to turn over.

The European Court of Human Rights has ordered [Germany](#) to pay compensation to a former prisoner after forcing him to go naked in a security cell for seven days. The court found this constituted a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights which bans inhuman or degrading treatment.

In [Israel](#) a report issued by the Public Defender's Office revealed widespread overcrowding, inadequate access to medical care, poor hygienic conditions and excessive punitive measures in most facilities. Prisoners were cuffed hand and foot, sometimes for months on end, while prisoners considered suicidal remained in restraints for long periods without access to proper medical care. There were examples of extreme overcrowding, with prisoners in one wing of Dekel Prison having just 1.3 square metres each of space.

In the [US](#) two private prison companies are embroiled in legal battles. GEO Group is a defendant in a suit alleging that the company's management of its juvenile detention centre in Walnut Grove, Mississippi caused a culture of violence and exploitation by selling drugs inside the facility and entering into sexual relationships with the prisoners. The suit alleges that prisoners were beaten by staff members while handcuffed and defenceless or sprayed with chemicals while locked in their cells, and that others were subjected to multiple stabbings and beatings, leaving one prisoner with permanent brain damage. The second company, Management and Training Corp, is the subject of a wrongful death suit filed by the relatives of a couple who were murdered by two prisoners who escaped from the Kingman prison in Arizona which is run by Management and Training Corp. A security review of the prison found that the prison had a malfunctioning perimeter alarm system; guards were not patrolling the fence and a door to a dormitory that should have been locked was propped open with a rock facilitating the prisoners' escape.

A report on the conditions in the women's ward of Welikada prison in [Sri Lanka](#) shows the prisoners living in massively overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, with one prison saying "About 150 of us live in a cell designed for 75 people. An open drain infested with rats runs the perimeter of the room." Another prisoner described the women's ward as "hell", with maggots in the food, a complete absence of beds, mats or pillows, and no fans despite the 33 degrees Celsius heat.

The use of solitary confinement in prisons in the US has been highlighted following the three week hunger strike at [California's](#) Pelican Bay prison. At its peak the strike spread to more than a third of California's prisons, where about 6,600 prisoners refused at least some of their meals. The protest was driven chiefly by demands for an end to long term solitary

confinement. The state of [Texas](#) has more prisoners in solitary confinement, or administrative segregation, than most other states. There are over 5,000 such prisoners who have been deemed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to be “confirmed” members of gangs, too organised, predatory and violent to mix with the 150,000 prisoners in the general population. They are locked in one man cells about 9 feet by 7 feet for 23 hours a day, often for decades. Another 4,000 or so prisoners are serving temporary stints as punishment for breaking rules or being escape threats. The effects of solitary confinement on prisoners are shown in the experiences of prisoners who were held in such conditions at Tamms Supermax prison in [Illinois](#). They reported that prisoners on suicide watch are left naked in their cells, and prisoners have been punished by “caging” – that is they are held naked or partially clothed in outdoor holding cages in inclement weather. The extreme environment of sensory deprivation and social exclusion also causes severe psychological problems for the prisoners, with many using such instruments as shavings of concrete or paper clips to self-mutilate.

Corruption is also a problem in some prisons. In the Cereso 1 prison in [Mexico](#) City authorities discovered a luxury cell that was equipped with wood furniture, a television set, DVD player, refrigerator and air conditioning and was being raffled off by its occupant to other prisoners. The head of the State Penitentiary System explained that guards in the states prisons had grown used to accepting bribes from prisoners to allow amenities to enter the prisons. In [Russia](#) the governor of Prison Number 3 in the town of Serpukhov, outside Moscow, and two of his deputies were fired after an investigation found blatant breaches at the prison. Photographs published by a Russian tabloid showed prisoners posing in homemade togas and sitting down at a table loaded with food. The case exposed the practice of prison staff granting privileges to well-connected prisoners. This is also shown in another example from [Russia](#) where a former prisoner claimed that anything could be bought for the right price.

In Queensland, [Australia](#) prison officers were found to be engaging in sexual affairs with prisoners and also taking bribes, while two former governors and a soldier have been charged with corruption following the riot at the El Rodeo prison in [Venezuela](#). They were also charged with facilitating the trafficking of arms and drugs and associating with criminals in the prison. In [Thailand](#) at least 17 prison officers have been fired after being caught colluding with prisoners to smuggle in mobile phones in exchange for money.

In some jurisdictions efforts are being made to improved conditions for prisoners. In the prison at Grand Turk on the [Turks and Caicos](#) Islands prisoners are being given more time for social visits. Previously visits only took place on weekends but this has been expanded to cover Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.

Authorities at Tihar Prison, [India](#), have decided to keep the cells unlocked for 12 hours a day and to carry out a monthly check of the special diet given to sick prisoners. They have also

decided to track down the families of deceased prisoners and return all their belongings and earnings to them.

In Durban, [South Africa](#), the mother and baby unit at Westville Prison has been refurbished. The work was paid for by a local businessman and was carried out by hundreds of members of the local community as part of the 67 minutes of selfless contributions for Mandela Day. The businessman is also funding a new crèche and the training of early childhood development teachers to enable the children to learn while in the facility.

Prison violence

Prisons in many countries have problems with violence, both from the staff and prisoners. In Ontario, [Canada](#), the ombudsman is launching an investigation into the use of excessive force by prison guards against prisoners in the province's prisons. He has received more than 100 complaints from prisoners who say correctional officers have mistreated them, including one who said he was choked by a prison officer until he was unconscious, and another who claims he lost three teeth after being punched by an officer. Canada's Correctional Investigator has [warned](#) that the country's federal prisons are getting more crowded, more tense and more polarised between young and old prisoners – a situation which is contributing to an increase in violence and deaths behind bars.

In [Denmark](#) it is alleged that a Turkish prisoner died after he was severely beaten by prison guards and that his death may have been caused by one of the guards sitting on him while he was handcuffed. In [South Africa](#) both the police and the department of correctional services have launched investigations into allegations of torture at Pretoria Central Prison after it was alleged that six prison staff shocked a prisoner with an electrified riot shield.

In [Bermuda](#) security at the Westgate prison is to be stepped up following threatened strike action by the prison's staff who had been feeling unsafe in their working environment. In Larkana, [Pakistan](#) 70 prisoners rioted and took five policemen hostage in protest at the prison authorities trying to move 200 prisoners to other prisons in the Sindh province. One of the security personnel was killed and three others injured during the rioting.

In [Kazakhstan](#) 16 prisoners were killed during a shootout when they tried to escape from the prison. Several of them died when a homemade bomb intended to blast a hole in the prisons' exterior wall detonated. In [Costa Rica](#) a total of 14 penitentiary officials have been suspended following a failed prison break and the death of a prisoner, Johel Araya, who was found dead in his cell. The autopsy on Mr Araya showed that his death was caused by internal injuries from beatings. Prior to his death, and following the failed prison break, Mr Araya had filed an appeal with the Constitutional Court alleging constant beatings, being kicked with pointed shoes and clubbing to his head and other parts of his body.

Developments in rehabilitation

Many countries have introduced initiatives to try and improve the rehabilitation and reintegration prospects of prisoners. In [The Bahamas](#) the education curriculum at HMP Fox Hill is being expanded to include distance learning courses, and further expansion is taking place in the areas of horticulture and agriculture. In the [Cayman Islands](#) more than a dozen prisoners passed exams in numeracy, English and English for Business Communication as part of the penal system's rehabilitation programme. In [Ghana](#) the government has provided Information Communication Technology laboratories at a number of prisons across the country to give the prisoners skills they can use on release. In [Nigeria](#) a special study centre has been opened at the Enugu prison to give prisoners access to university education.

[Brazil](#) is cutting prison terms for prisoners who participate in education programmes regardless of their crime. A law published in the official gazette says prisoners will get one day knocked off their sentences for every 12 hours in the classroom. The law also cuts prison sentences by one day for every three that prisoners work in the prison or in work release programmes.

In Gujarat, [India](#), the prison authorities have introduced special vocational training modules along with counselling sessions for prisoners. The aim of the training and counselling is to help prisoners to earn a decent living on release. The vocational training will include courses in such areas as tailoring, baking, short hand and even in electrical and mechanical skills.

In [Taiwan](#) the focus is on reforming prisoners, allowing them to do a wide variety of tasks from cooking and baking to running a laundry service and learning painting, porcelain making and performing arts. In Coro prison in western [Venezuela](#) prisoners can learn to play an instrument – violin, tuba, double bass or saxophone - and become part of the prison orchestra or train their voices during choir practice.

In California, [US](#), female prisoners can participate in a programme that trains minimum security prisoners to become wildland firefighters. The prisoners can get up to two days taken off their sentences for every day they serve at the conservation camp run by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

A [Hong Kong](#) prison has held the city's first job fair for prisoners in a bid to help them find work before they are released. Nearly 250 jobs were on offer, from retail and beverage services to construction and mechanical engineering. Prisoners in Uttar Pradesh, [India](#), can now open savings accounts in nationalised banks where they will be able to deposit their wages. Wages are paid at the rate of Rs40 for skilled prisoners, Rs30 for semi skilled and Rs20 for unskilled prisoners for each working day. Prisoners are engaged in making garments, sports goods, furniture and agricultural works.

In Tartu, [Estonia](#), plans have been approved for a minimum security prison to open in the city. The prison is designed for people in the district who have been convicted of less serious

offences. The main goal is for the prisoners to continue attending school or going to work outside the prison and maintain social ties with the community and with their family.

Sentencing and the law

In [South Africa](#) the Department of Correctional Services is to introduce a new set of measures and programmes to rehabilitate prisoners and assist them to reintegrate into society. Prisoners sentenced to less than two years could soon serve time in pre-release centres. A pilot project allowing the Department to use electronic tags to monitor prisoners on parole is also being launched. It also envisages introducing legislation that would see sentenced pregnant women being electronically tagged so they could give birth first before being sent to prison.

In [Saudi Arabia](#) legal experts believe that alternative punishments could drastically reduce the number of young prisoners in the country's jails. Many government bodies including the Justice Ministry and the Directorate of Prisons are working with organisations such as the Committee for the Care of Convicts and their Families and the Human Rights Committee to adopt alternative sentences in court. In Illinois, [US](#), a new juvenile justice law has been signed which aims to keep more young people out of prison. The law requires juvenile court judges to consider additional factors such as a youth's mental and educational needs before determining whether secure confinement is necessary.

The Correctional Services Commissioner of [Swaziland](#) met with Shiselwani region chiefs and traditional leaders in an effort to promote non-custodial measures, in particular introducing community service as a penal sanction. He said it cost less to implement and had considerable potential value for the community.

In [Brazil](#) prolonged pre-trial detention is common and in an effort to tackle the problem the Brazilian Congress passed a new law on alternative measures to pre-trial detention. The law emphasises that pre-trial detention should be the exception and not the rule and puts forth nine alternatives such as bail and electronic monitoring. For first time offenders who are accused of non-violent crimes, which if convicted could carry up to four years in prison, the judge cannot impose pre-trial detention.

A study carried out by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics in [Australia](#) found that suspended sentences are being given to criminals who would not go to jail anyway. The Bureau Director said the findings were consistent with research showing that alternatives to prison almost always end up being used on people who would not have gone to prison.

[Cambodian](#) rights groups say they are worried that a new draft law is not clear enough in its efforts to reform the prison system, which is plagued with mismanagement and overcrowding. The groups say that a new law is needed but one which meets international standard. In its current form the new law does not outline clear visitation privileges,

punishments for prison guards and other officials who take bribes from prisoners who want better care, or definitions for torture or abuse of prisoners.

[China](#)'s top legislature will revise the Criminal Procedure Law to prevent judges from accepting confessions from tortured suspects and giving these suspects more defence options in a bid to ensure justice while protecting defendants' human rights. The amendment also gives suspects held in custody more freedom to meet their defence attorney and states that such a meeting should not be monitored.

In [Israel](#) a panel of legal experts has recommended that new legislation establish two levels of murder in the penal code. One "basic murder" would carry a maximum sentence of life in prison, while the second "murder under aggravated circumstances" would carry a mandatory life sentence. The panel also recommended doing away with the crime of manslaughter and for legislating three different crimes instead. It is likely that the recommendations will be implemented in the coming months.

[South Korea](#) has become the first Asian country to approve chemical castration for paedophiles, in a law which took effect in early August. The Ministry of Justice announced that it will implement the chemical course on sex offenders up to two months before being released from prison and within a maximum 15 years of their crimes. When the Bill was proposed in 2008 it required the consent of the prisoner, but after a spate of serious attacks on minors enraged the public the Bill was revised to drop the phrase "the treatment requires concurrence of criminals" and then passed the National Assembly in June 2010.

In [Kenya](#) people held in custody, detention or prisons are set to enjoy greater freedom by the end of the year when at least five laws are amended or repealed to comply with the Constitution. The new laws will overhaul the way prisoners are restrained and will see them start earning an income while in prison, complete their pursuit of education and enjoy better communication with the outside world, among other benefits.

In [Nigeria](#) the Senate has passed the second reading of an amendment bill seeking to strip Nigerians convicted in Commonwealth countries of the right of consent before they could be transferred home to serve their jail terms. Opponents of the Bill claim that apart from an infringement of the rights of the prisoners, it would also overburden the nation's already overstretched finances and its inadequate prison facilities.

In Pennsylvania, [US](#), a judge has been ordered to spend almost 30 years in prison for his role in a massive justice bribery scandal that prompted the state's high court to quash thousands of convictions. The judge had taken \$1million in bribes from the builder of a pair of juvenile detention centres, and in return had filled the cells of the private centres with children as young as 10, many of them first time offenders convicted of theft and minor crimes.

Prison policy

New legislation requires [Hungary](#)'s law enforcement agencies to order all their supplies – from food to office furniture – from businesses operating in prisons. Under a government decree effective 1 July state owned prison companies must be sole suppliers to all the administrative units belonging to the Interior Ministry. Under a value cap of 8 million forints no other bids will be considered, and even above this limit prison companies have a significant advantage.

All [Rwandan](#) prisons are set to become environmentally friendly following the installation of biogas plants which reduce heavy expenditure on firewood as a source of energy for cooking in prisons. The [Zambia](#) Prisons Service has recorded a bumper harvest of about 60,000 50kg bags of maize from its prisons around the country, which would be used to feed the prisoners and help to reduce costs for the Prisons Service.

[Colombia](#)'s Justice Minister has confirmed that the country's scandal hit prison authority Inpec will be completely dismantled and replaced by a new institution managed by the police. The Minister asserted that responsibility for running the country's prisons would remain in the hands of the state and there would be no privatisation or third party contracting in the new authority.

In [Bhutan](#) major reforms are underway to improve the state of and management of the country's prisons. Once such change is to delink the prison services from the Royal Bhutan Police, meaning that the prisons division would be under the home ministry. In [Kazakhstan](#) human rights groups have criticised a presidential decree that returns control of the penitentiary system to the Interior Ministry, saying that the decree violates the government's commitment to bring the Kazakh penitentiary system closer to international standards.

In Western [Australia](#) the prison transport company G4S has been fined \$285,000 for its involvement in the death of Aboriginal elder Mr Ward who died of heatstroke after being transported in the back of a prison van in 2008. The Court was told that G4S should have ensured the air conditioning in the van worked and that Mr Ward could communicate with the drivers. In a similar incident in [New South Wales](#) a prisoner called Mark Holcroft died of a heart attack in a prison transport van after fellow prisoners shouted at guards to let them know that Mr Holcroft was ill but were ignored. Subsequently the State's department of Corrective Services has announced that intercom systems will be fitted in all prisoner transport vans by 2014.

In [Canada](#) the cost of the federal prison system has risen 86% since the Harper government took over in 2006, government reports show. The Correctional Investigator of Canada says costs are rising in part because prisoners are getting longer sentences and are being kept under tighter security conditions.

Prison authorities in the [US](#) have been looking at ways of shoring up the financial situations of their prisons. Polk County, Florida, is cutting back on spending by making prisoners pay for their underwear. The move is estimated to save around \$45,000 a year. In Butler, Ohio, prisoners are obliged to pay a 'reception fee' of \$20 upon arrival at the prison, a scheme which has been operating in neighbouring Hamilton for some time resulting in an estimated \$200,000 per year. A Republican Senator in California wanted charge prisoners \$25 per day of incarceration but his initiative failed to get approval from the state legislature committee.

In the [US](#) the fastest privatisation venture ever undertaken by the state of Florida took a big step forward when the state formally sought plans from private firms to operate all prisons in an 18-county region in South Florida. In an effort to cut costs a deadline has been set of 1 January 2012 to privatise 30 state prisons, road camps and work release centres. The state will hire one company to run all the facilities.

For the first time in the state's history [Texas](#) is closing down a prison. Along with the Central Unit in Sugar Land the state is also closing down three juvenile detention centres, with the goal of focusing more on rehabilitation and crime prevention, and also to save money.

Ministers in the [Icelandic](#) Government disagree on how to go about financing a much needed new prison facility. The Finance Minister wants private investors to fund the construction while the Minister of Interior states that construction of a new prison must be funded by the government.

South [Australian](#) prison officers have rejected a plan by the state government to modify shipping containers for use as prison cells, saying "Prisons are not only where prisoners are secured, they are also worksites for correctional officers. As such, proper standards are vital."

In the [Philippines](#) the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology has banned gay and lesbian prison officers from strip searching people of the same sex who are suspected of smuggling contraband into prisons. The move has been criticised by LGBT rights groups who hold that the policy is discriminatory and underestimates the professionalism of LGBT staff.

A report from [Turkey](#) says that 70% of released adult prisoners fail to reintegrate into society and return to prison within two years of being released. The report also says that 68% of former prisoners under the age of 18 return to prison within one year of being released because of a variety of problems such as lack of home or work. Some 30% of released prisoners do not have a home to go back to, while more than two thirds of prisoners were already jobless when they were sentenced to prison and two thirds of those who had a job before being detained lost it whilst imprisoned.

In [Finland](#) debate has been sparked about minimum security open prisons after a prisoner who had been convicted in two homicide cases absconded from the Vanaja open prison. In recent years prisoners have escaped from open prisons, or failed to return from furlough at

an average rate of more than one a week. In the first six months of 2011 about 40 such prisoners absconded.

In [Denmark](#) compensation claims for unjustified imprisonment have more than doubled in the past eight years. The Chairman of the Retspolitik Forening said “the reason is that too many people are being held in custody and many of these cases are dismissed when there is not enough evidence to demonstrate a justified suspicion. This means people are held in detention for too long without substantial evidence. So when they are released the issue of compensation is raised.”

Gay prisoners who register their respective partner or companion with prison officials now have the right to receive them for conjugal visits in all [Brazil](#)'s prisons. According to the new regulation the conjugal visit must be guaranteed by penitentiary authorities at least once a month and cannot be prohibited or suspended as a disciplinary measure, except in cases where the infraction being sanctioned is linked to the improper use of that right.

The Prisons Department in [Sri Lanka](#) says steps have been taken to install mobile phone signal jammers to prevent prisoners from carrying out the narcotics business and other illegal activities from their cells. One such jammer has been installed at the Wlikada prison at a cost of Rs. 10 million and had so far proved effective in preventing prisoners from using their mobile phones. In Gilgit, [Pakistan](#) the installation of mobile phone jammers in two prisons has affected all the mobile networks in the city leaving local residents unable to make calls or send text messages.

Senior officials from the Organisation of Eastern [Caribbean](#) States (OECS) have been discussing the possibility of establishing a regional police force to serve the sub region as it moves towards closer integration. They are also looking at other arms of law enforcement and are considering a recommendation for the prison system to be based on one island but built big enough to accommodate prisoners from other islands.

The Titanic, the central area of the Civil Prison in Port au Prince, [Haiti](#) has been renovated and inaugurated following the damage caused by the earthquake in January 2011. The renovations were funded by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and include baths and showers being built in the outside courtyards and the improvement of sleeping conditions. A new hydro-power plant provides electricity for all wings of the prison and for administration offices. The ICRC is also organising a campaign against scabies for the 700 prisoners set to be transferred to the new quarters. In addition to receiving treatment , each prisoner will be given a personal hygiene kit, an undershirt, a pair of shorts, a bath towel and a sheet.

New figures from Queensland's Department of Corrective Services, [Australia](#), show that women are being turned away from visiting prison in far greater numbers than men. Of the 220 people turned away from visits last financial year, 218 were women, with the majority

found to be scantily dressed. Of the six dress standards enforced across the state's prisons the two requirements recurrently flouted by visitors ban clothing of a "transparent type" or "revealing nature."

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