



# International Centre for Prison Studies

## ICPS NEWS DIGEST

### 11<sup>th</sup> Edition – September - October 2012

Welcome to the eleventh edition of the ICPS News Digest, a selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. We aim in the Digest to cover all regions and include new developments in policy and practice, as well as information from official and intergovernmental bodies. The Digest is produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 September to 31 October 2012. Please click on the blue highlighted words to access the news reports.

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#### **Prison populations**

The Senate Committee on Human Rights has released a report on prison conditions in [Italy](#). The report shows that the country's 206 prisons have capacity for around 46,000 prisoners but are currently holding around 67,000 people, giving an overcrowding rate of 145 percent. The report claims that this overcrowding creates competition for limited resources, aggression, higher rates of illness and higher suicide rates. In 2011 183 people died in prison in Italy, 63 of whom committed suicide.

[Canada](#)'s federal prison population is growing, largely because more visible minorities, Aboriginal people and women, are going to prison than ever before according to a report by the country's Correctional Investigator. The report says that 21 percent of the federal prison population is of Aboriginal descent, while nine percent are black Canadians, and that in the past five years the number of women in federal prisons has increased by almost 40 percent.

Overcrowding in [US](#) federal prisons is projected to increase throughout the next decade, according to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) which studied the growth in the prison population between fiscal years 2006 to 2011 and found that the population in federal prisons grew by 9.5 percent in that time. The amount by which prisons were overcrowded increased from 36 to 39 percent, with the GAO estimating that it could

exceed 45 percent by 2018. The overcrowding has led to waiting lists for education and drug treatment programmes, limited meaningful work opportunities and increased prisoner to staff ratios.

The government in New South Wales, [Australia](#), has welcomed a surprise fall in the state's prison populations, warning that jail acts as a 'university of crime' for some prisoners. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, which published the figures, suggested that less crime and shorter sentences were responsible for the drop. The number of people in prison in NSW fell 6.7 percent from 10,322 to 9,626 between July 2009 and December 2011. This comes after the state's prison population rose steadily for 15 years prior to 2009, and increased by 65 percent between 1998 and 2009.

Conversely, the prison population in the Northern Territory, [Australia](#), increased by almost 14 percent between June 2011 and June 2012. Almost 84 percent of those in prison in the state are Aboriginal, despite making up only 30 percent of the state population.

About 80 percent of prisoners in [Cameroon](#) are pre-trial detainees due to excessively long delays in the trial process, according to a study by the Cameroon branch of *Advocats Sans Frontières*. Of the 23,000 prisoners in the country, 14,265 were awaiting trial. The country's prisons have a capacity of 15,250, with the prisons reported to be old, overcrowded and filthy. In [Nigeria](#) 36,000 of the country's 50,000 prisoners are awaiting trial according to the Controller-General of Prisons.

A report by the International Crisis Group has found that in [Pakistan](#) there are 91 prisons with an official capacity of 42,617. At the end of January 2011 these prisons were holding around 78,000 prisoners, representing an occupancy rate of around 180 percent. Of these prisoners, 70.7 percent are unconvicted due to inefficiencies in the justice system.

The newly appointed Commissioner General of Prisons in [Tanzania](#) has promised to look at ways of decongesting the country's prisons. The prisons have a capacity of 27,552 but are holding around 38,000 prisoners. The Commissioner proposes to introduce a 'punishment policy' whereby those found guilty by the courts are either given a reasonable term in prison or an alternative punishment.

The [Togolese](#) Human Rights League has reported that the country's 12 prisons hold more than twice their designed capacity, with congestion, as well as inadequate food, medical care and poor hygiene, leading to diseases and death. In the main prison in the capital there are 1,844 prisoners being held in conditions designed for 666. One prisoner said "we sleep very close to one another, with our heads on someone else's feet, like sardines in a tin. At night we sleep in shifts, while some lie down, the others stand against the wall waiting impatiently for their turn."

The [Costa Rican](#) prison system has capacity for 9,813 but at 27 September was holding 12,987, 32.3 percent more than capacity. The maximum allowed by the Constitutional Court is 20 percent over capacity, to ensure the human rights of the prisoners. Three of the country's prisons have reported record overcrowding. The San Sebastian Prison in San Jose is 79.5 percent overcrowded, meaning that for every ten beds occupied, eight prisoners

sleep on the floor. La Reforma prison is 65.1 percent overcrowded, while the Cartago prison is 54.7 over capacity. Overcrowding in Costa Rica is caused by a tendency towards long prison sentences, delays in trials and the inappropriate use of non-custodial sentences.

The number of people held in [Russian](#) prisons has fallen by more than 150,000 over the past three and a half years, from 887,000 to 731,000 between January 2009 and June 2012, according to the Justice Minister. The fall is attributed to a number of federal laws which have been adopted over the past few years allowing the use of non-custodial measures and sanctions. The crime rate has not risen.

The Chamber of Deputies in the [Czech Republic](#) has passed legislation to reduce prison overcrowding. The Bill allows for greater use of house arrest and release on probation for less serious offences, and will also shorten the deadlines for early release from prison. The country's prisons have 20,700 places but 23,200 prisoners.

Prison staff at the Kedungpane prison in Central Java, [Indonesia](#), have used the overcrowding at the prison, which holds 1000 prisoners in a building designed for 500, to 'sell' the cells according to an official. Cells at the prison are divided into three classes, with first class cells holding one or two prisoners, second class holding five to seven prisoners and third class holding nine to 12 prisoners. Prisoners who want to live in first class cells are, according to the official, asked to pay Rp 2 million each to the officers, prisoners in second class pay Rp 1 million and those in third class do not pay but are packed into the most overcrowded cells.

A total of 967 prisoners sentenced for federal crime in [Mexico](#) have been moved to a newly opened penitentiary which has been built as part of a public-private partnership. The government plans to build eight new prisons with space for 20,000 prisoners under this model, in order to ease overcrowding at existing prisons across the country. As of July [Mexico](#)'s prison population stood at 48,872, or 25 percent above capacity, with the Human Rights Commission reporting that 60 percent of the country's 440 prisons or jails are controlled by gangs.

[Australia](#)'s first prison designed for Indigenous Australians has received its first intake of prisoners. The West Kimberley Regional Prison in Western Australia has been designed to meet the unique cultural needs of Indigenous men and women. The state has the highest rate of Indigenous imprisonment in the country at twice the national rate. In Australia as a whole Indigenous Australians make up less than four percent of the population but account for 28 percent of the prison populations.

The government of [New Zealand](#) has announced it has signed a 25 year \$840 million contract with a the SecureFuture consortium to design, finance, build, operate and maintain a new 960 bed men's prison in South Auckland. [Opponents](#) have said the new prison is a waste of money as the current prison system has around 1,600 empty beds. Serco, the company which will manage the new prison, has confirmed it will be paid for 100 percent occupancy event if beds remain empty. The company has been heavily criticised for failing to meet a number of targets at the other prison it runs in the country, Mt. Eden.

According to reports, [Georgia](#)'s new government plans to release thousands of prisoners under an amnesty, but has not yet decided which categories of prisoners will be released. Figures from 1 July 2012 show that there were 23,406 prisoners in Georgia. The President of [Turkmenistan](#) has reportedly signed an amnesty decree for 2,000 prisoners to be released on the occasion of the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the country's independence, while the [Serbian](#) parliament is debating a proposed amnesty bill which would see some 3,600 be released or have their sentences reduced by 25 percent. The Minister of Justice says the bill is necessary as Serbian prisons were built for 7,400 but are holding 11,375 prisoners.

[Chile](#) is releasing and deporting foreign prisoners, mainly in prison on drug trafficking charges, as part of a broader attempt at improving conditions in the country's overcrowded prisons. According to figures from the Gendarmeria, there are 48,658 prisoners held in facilities with a capacity of 33,822. Of those 1,700 are foreign prisoners, 1,117 of whom have applied for the pardon, and 740 have been granted it so far.

The [Japanese](#) prison system is grappling with the issue of how to handle the rapidly increasing population of elderly prisoners. According to the Justice Ministry, the total number of prisoners at the end of 2011 was 61,102, down by nearly 10,000 from the peak at the end of 2008. However the number of prisoners aged 70 or older continues to rise and reached 2,524 at the end of last year, 2.9 times the figure at the end of 2001.

In the [Cayman Islands](#) a Freedom of Information request has revealed that older men are still being housed with juveniles at Eagle House, the centre designed for the country's youngest prisoners, and teenagers are still being housed inside the adult prison at Northward. The Government is building a new young offenders centre which is due to open in September 2013.

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

The prison population rate in the Seychelles, the island nation off the east coast of Africa, has now risen to 641 per 100,000 of the national population, giving it the third highest rate in the world after the U.S.A. (730) and St Kitts and Nevis (645).

The rate in the Russian Federation (630 in mid-2008) has continued to fall and in October it dropped below 500 for the first time in 20 years. This reflects a drop in actual numbers from 895,000 to 712,500.

Earlier this year Georgia overtook the Russian Federation as the country with the highest rate in Europe and it still holds this position. But its rate has now begun to fall (having been over 530 throughout the 15 months to March this year it was 514 in July) and its newly elected government has announced plans for a large amnesty.

Turkey still has the highest rate (165) among European countries that were not part of the former socialist bloc. England and Wales (153) and Scotland (150) come next, ahead of Spain (149) whose rate has now been falling for over two years. The rates in Italy (109), France (108),

Belgium (101), Ireland (98), the Netherlands (87) and Germany (83) are much lower; those in the Nordic countries are all below 75.

In South America Chile still has the highest rate (283), followed by Uruguay (279), Brazil and Guyana (both 260). But the fastest growth in the prison population rate is in Colombia (129 at the start of 2007, 150 at the start of 2009, 181 at the start of 2011 and 235 at the beginning of September this year).

Sharp rises in the female prison population have been recorded in eight countries. In Europe the Czech Republic has seen a rise of 20% in the 18 months to mid-2012 and Hungary and Slovakia recorded rises in 2011 of 20% and 17% respectively.

In the Americas the number of women prisoners in Peru has risen by 28% in the 18 months to mid-2012 (19% per year), in Costa Rica by 33% in the 18 months to July 2012 (22% per year) and in Colombia by 49% from 5,684 to 8,478 in the 20 months to August 2012 (29% per year).

In Asia the number of women prisoners in Thailand has risen in the 2 years to mid-2012 from 29,175 to 37,790 (15% per year) and in Cambodia in the same period from 856 to 1,266 (24% per year).

## Health

Cases of self-injury by federal prisoners across [Canada](#) have nearly tripled in the last five years, a 'dramatic' rise as prison conditions become more chaotic and overcrowded according to the Correctional Investigator. There were 912 incidents of self-harm in the 2011-12 fiscal year involving 300 prisoners, including cases of cutting, head banging, self-strangulation, burning and ingesting harmful objects. Aboriginal prisoners accounted for 45 percent of all self-harm incidents, and close to a third of cases occurred in segregation units.

Increasing numbers of prison officers in Beijing, [China](#) have been receiving psychological training with the aim of providing professional help to prisoners. More than 230 officers have so far received national certificates, and each prison has been equipped with a mental health treatment room and equipment.

A report from [India](#) suggests that traumatising prison conditions and practices often have a damaging and long term impact on the mental health of prisoners, especially women. The Secretary General of the Penal Reform and Justice Association, Dr Rani Dhavan Shankardass, reports that at least 50 percent of women imprisoned for more than six months show signs of some of the most common mental disorders, and stresses the need for counselling.

AIDS related deaths among all state and federal prisoners in the [US](#) dropped from 24 per 100,000 prisoners in 2001 to five per 100,000 in 2010, according to a report by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

A former federal prisoner and four AIDS prevention organisations in [Canada](#) are suing the federal government for failing to provide needle and syringe exchange programmes inside the country's prisons. The lawsuit claims the government is violating the rights of prisoners

under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Instead of seeking a monetary settlement, the plaintiffs are asking for a supervisory or structural injunction in which a judge could order the government to set up needle exchanges in prisons across the country.

An AIDS awareness campaigner is taking a groundbreaking test case to [Zimbabwe](#)'s highest court to force police and prison authorities to ensure those with HIV receive their life-prolonging medication. Douglas Muzanenhamo claims he was denied appropriate retroviral treatment in prison for three weeks and his condition deteriorated. He also said he was held in filthy cells making prisoners with HIV susceptible to fatal infections, was made to walk barefoot through human blood and excreta and that he was held in solitary confinement for demanding his drugs.

A lawsuit in the [US](#) seeking to end Alabama's distinction of being one of only two states that still segregates HIV infected prisoners is going to trial after a US District Judge rejected the state prison system's arguments that it is immune from the suit and that prisoners have no right to medical privacy.

To mark World Sight Day, a team from the Noor Dubai Foundation visited prisons across the [United Arab Emirates](#) to provide free screening for prisoners. Prisoners had a complete examination of their vision, and the team provided glasses for prisoners and prepared a management plan for those with eye problems. The screening also included blood sugar and blood pressure checks and specific tests to look for diabetes related eye disease.

The [Philippine](#) government has subsidised the health care premiums of 36,111 prisoners in the country's prisons, under the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, giving health benefits to prisoners and their families, including free hospitalisation in government hospitals.

Realising the importance of oral hygiene for prisoners across the state of Madhya Pradesh, [India](#), the jail department has decided to provide tongue cleaners for them. The Director General of Prisons has issued orders to all jail superintendents to procure the tongue cleaners, which must be made of plastic and be replaced every two months.

## **Treatment of prisoners**

In Queensland, [Australia](#), a report by the Commission for Young People and Child Guardian into use of force at youth detention centres has found that the 'pain compliance / management' technique used in the centres may not be appropriate for use on young people because of the risk of injuries. The report investigated six cases of serious injury at detention centres in Brisbane and Townsville and recommended that staff should be given appropriate guidance in relation to policy, procedures and training to ensure the application of force is within the law.

In Victoria, [Australia](#), lawyers and the Child Safety Commissioner have raised serious concerns about a 16 year old Aboriginal boy who was held in solitary confinement in Port Phillip adult prison, where he was transferred after cutting a guard's neck during an escape attempt at the Parkville Juvenile Justice Centre. The teenager spent 22 hours a day in

solitary confinement. The other two hours were spent handcuffed in the exercise yard. Following complaints from the Aboriginal Legal Service the boy has been returned to youth detention, but legal experts are now questioning how many other juveniles are being held in adult prisons.

In the [US](#), more than 200 prisoners at two California prisons went on hunger strike for up to a week in protest at proposed changes to the management of higher security prison units. Prison advocates say the higher-security units amount to solitary confinement and that prisoners can in some cases spend decades there with little human contact. Prison officials say the units are necessary to disrupt gang activity within the prisons. The state prison system, one of the largest in the country with an adult prison population of more than 119,000, has been struggling to ease overcrowding, improve the health-care system and make changes to how it manages higher security prison units.

Fifteen prisoners at Corradino Prison in [Malta](#) were admitted to hospital after allegedly swallowing blades in a protest against the prison's authorities. The prisoners claim they were excluded from participating in a concert held in the prison, and were protesting against what they saw as discriminatory treatment by the authorities. Another prisoner in [Malta](#) has gone on hunger strike in protest against excessive delays in his ongoing appeal.

A report by the New York Civil Liberties Union in the [US](#) found that the state prison system sent prisoners to solitary confinement more than 13,500 times in 2011, with each stay lasting an average of five months. The report calls the state's use of isolation and segregation of prisoners "arbitrary and unjustified" and urges the adoption of clear criteria for using confinement to punish prisoners.

In [Israel](#), dozens of prisoners, some of them minors, are being held separately from the other prisoners for lengthy periods, some longer than two years, according to a report released by the Public Defender's Office. Most of the prisoners spend 23 hours a day in their cells, with no access to medical treatment, rehabilitation programmes, education or recreation. On official visits to confinement cells, attorneys found horrible conditions, including stifling heat in the summer and freezing cold in winter; poor sanitation; insect infestation and structural conditions that impair prisoners' privacy.

In the [US](#), a recent audit of the Ohio prison brought by Corrections Corporation of America found the private prison is only meeting 66.7 percent of the state's standards. The report found a total of 47 violations in the prison, including prisoners complaining of feeling unsafe and single cells holding two prisoners with some sleeping on the floor. Only one staff member was properly trained to meet Ohio Risk Assessment System standards, and the local fire plan had no specific steps to release prisoners from locked areas in case of emergency.

A new report by the [Turkish](#) parliament's Human Rights Commission has revealed inhumane living conditions in a number of the country's prisons. One prison in Mardin province was holding 987 women prisoners despite the capacity of the prison being 480, meaning 67 women have to share one toilet and up to four women share one bunk bed. There are an insufficient number of windows to let in clean air and flies have swarmed the sleeping areas.



Water is only available for two hours a day on average, causing serious hygiene issues. Also in [Turkey](#), seven prisoners aged 18 to 21 attempted to commit suicide in the dormitory of a prison in Diyarbakir. Human rights activists blame poor prison conditions for the attempt, saying that more than 20 people have to share dorms built for seven, and that adults and juveniles are accommodated together.

A report by Amnesty International claims that prisoners in [Chad](#) are held in such inhumane conditions that 'a prison sentence risks becoming a death sentence.' The report's authors saw prisoners held in severely overcrowded and unventilated cells and detail incidents where nine prisoners died of asphyxiation and seven others were shot by guards. The report states that most of the prisoners were emaciated and weak, some were chained 24 hours a day and many suffered skin diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, malaria or TB.

The [Ethiopian](#) Human Rights Commission has launched a programme to monitor 119 prisons across the country where they will look at the way prisoners are treated and whether the prison administrations respect prisoners' rights. The investigating teams will interview prison officials and prisoners and will report on their findings.

Prisoners at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town, [South Africa](#), are eating from dirty pots and the kitchens are filthy according to an independent prison visitor who was reporting to the Correctional Services Portfolio Committee. The visitor also reported that the Medium B section is 100 percent overcrowded and when it rains water gets in. She said she had complained to the head of the correctional centre and the area commissioner, but nothing had been done. The Committee resolved to consider strengthening the position of prison visitors so they could compel prison managers to improve conditions. Also in [South Africa](#), a recent report by the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services found that the correctional services department owes around R1.3 billion in damages to current and former prisoners for bodily injury and rape while in prison. The report also revealed a lack of healthcare staff in the prisons and describes the problems caused by the high proportion of remand prisoners, who make up 30 percent of the population.

The [Colombian](#) prison service has been ordered to award a former prisoner approximately \$55,000 to compensate him for the inhumane conditions he endured whilst imprisoned. The Public Defender said that overcrowding in the prisons has become an endemic problem, with prisons averaging 40 percent over capacity, the worst case in the country being 140 percent over capacity.

Overcrowding at Windsor jail in [Canada](#) has created Third World conditions according to a local defence lawyer who represents several women currently held at the prison. The lawyer said the situation is particularly bad for women because of different health and hygiene requirements such as menstruation and pregnancy. She also said there are lice in the prison, three prisoners are held in cells designed for two and the prison is understaffed.

In [Ireland](#) a report by the Inspector of Prisons has revealed a culture of ignoring or violating the human rights of children and young adults at St Patrick's Institution in Dublin. The Inspector found a litany of abuse including forcible stripping and bullying and intimidation of



prisoners and staff by a small minority of prison officers. An action plan has been put in place to tackle the issues raised in the report.

Prisoners at the high security prison in Skien, [Norway](#), have filed a formal complaint with state competition authorities after the prison's only kiosk, where they can buy food to supplement the meals provided by the prison, has increased its prices. The prisoners want authorities to provide more retail competition within the prison with the hope that it will bring the prices back down.

Two male prisoners at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison in [Ghana](#) were taken to the local hospital when a prison officer punished them after allegedly catching them having sex. The officer ordered some other prisoners to mix salt and gunpowder which was smeared around both prisoners' genitals resulting in severe burns. The Regional Commander has set up a committee to investigate the incident.

## **Prison violence**

Four prisoners died and 16 others were injured in a fight at a prison in northern [Mexico](#). Most of the 490 prisoners held at the prison took part in the disturbance, which appeared to be part of a struggle for control of the prison. In La Reforma prison in [Costa Rica](#) one prisoner died and two were wounded during a confrontation between prisoners from different gangs, while in Nossa Senhora da Gloria, [Brazil](#), 485 prisoners rioted and took a guard hostage in protest at the overcrowding in a prison built to hold 180 but which was holding 500 prisoners.

Approximately 700 prisoners at [Lebanon](#)'s largest prison held ten policemen hostage during a riot in which they also set fire to bedding and rubbish bins. The riot took place during a visit to the country by Pope Benedict XVI, and the prisoners called on the Pope to appeal to the Lebanese state for clemency. The prisoners released the policemen after authorities promised to convey their demands to the relevant authorities.

Two [Turkish](#) prison guards and a deputy prison director have been sentenced to life imprisonment for torturing journalist and human rights activist Engin Ceber to death in prison in 2008. Amnesty International hailed it a landmark verdict as public officials are seldom brought to justice for acts of torture and ill treatment.

[Irish](#) prison service figures show that there were 1,115 incidents of attacks by prisoners on other prisoners in 2011, up from 1,014 in 2010. The highest number of incidents was recorded at St Patrick's Institution for young offenders, where 367 assaults were recorded, more than double the amount recorded at Mountjoy Prison despite having only one third the number of prisoners.

Police were deployed in prisons in [Georgia](#) to replace prison officers after videos showing the alleged rape and beating of prisoners were shown on television, leading to protests by [thousands](#) of people across the country ahead of the country's elections. Some of the footage showed a prisoner begging for mercy before being apparently raped with a stick, while another video showed prison guards brutally kicking a prisoner. The prison minister

resigned over the scandal and the government promised to eradicate the torture of prisoners.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice in the [US](#) has reported ten homicides so far in 2012, up from three in 2011 and the highest in 15 years. The homicides don't appear to be connected and are scattered across the 111 prison system. The department's inspector general is uncertain of the reason for the increase.

A coroner in [Canada](#) has recommended that multiple murderers should not share cells and that dangerous prisoners should 'jump the queue' for their own sleeping quarters. The recommendation came following an inquest into the death of a prisoner who was murdered by his cellmate who was previously convicted of six murders and once claimed to have killed a total of 16 people in Canada and the US.

## **Developments in rehabilitation**

The [Philippine](#) government has announced plans to open call centres in prisons across the country. The first step will be to train the prisoners in Information Technology skills which they will then be able to utilise in the call centres. The aim is to give prisoners skills that they will be able to use on release as a step towards rehabilitation.

The open jail concept in Bihar, [India](#), has attracted praise from other countries. In Buxar open jail prisoners are given a flat to live in with their families within the jail compound. There are 104 such flats, which feature one main room with a separate kitchen and bathroom. The eligible prisoners, all of whom are male, are selected by a committee from different jails in Bihar after being monitored for good behaviour. They usually comprise those who have served half of their sentence. Many of the prisoners leave the jail from 6am to 7pm to go to work and others are enrolled in vocational courses. Authorities in the [state](#) are also setting up gymnasiums in jails and will also organise a body-building competition. The idea behind the exercise is to keep prisoners busy in healthy competitions and to move away from crime.

In New South Wales, [Australia](#), the government has provided \$10 million to fund drug and alcohol rehabilitation services for people released from prison. The funding will be rolled out over four years to 11 providers of residences and community outreach programmes with the aim of creating diversions from prison, driving down the prison population and helping people function in their communities.

In [Singapore](#) an enhanced supervisory programme for repeat drug offenders who are deemed to be at high risk of reoffending has been introduced. In addition to urine tests for the first two years, those under supervision will be required to undergo a programme of intensive compulsory counselling. They will also be placed under strict curfew hours and electronic monitoring. Prison counsellors and caseworkers will also conduct follow-up sessions to refer them for employment, housing and skills training. About 500 people a year are expected to undergo enhanced supervision over the next two years.

In [New Zealand](#) nearly \$2 million has gone towards rehabilitation and special incentive payments to prisoners. Prisoners receive the incentives for activities, nearly all in prison, such as cleaning, work and classroom based training, joining community work programmes and participating in rehabilitation. The Corrections Department links rehabilitation efforts to a large fall in reoffending, which the government wants to reduce by a quarter in the next five years. Also in [New Zealand](#) two new drug courts have opened which will deal with about 100 people with alcohol and drug dependency issues in its first year of operation. The courts will take on those who plead guilty, face a term of at least three years in prison and show a willingness to change their ways. They will be put through an intense programme designed to tackle their dependency issues and, if they are successful, their efforts will be taken into account at sentencing.

Staff at the only prison in the [Cook Islands](#) say that a new rehabilitation and education centre will help prisoners gain employment when they are released. Much of the work on turning the former superintendent's residence into the new centre is being carried out by the prisoners, and the centre will allow the prisoners, many of whom are teenagers, to undertake courses including literacy, numeracy, computer skills and architectural design.

The Corrections Minister in [Tasmania](#) has opened a new vegetable processing factory at Risdon prison. The Minister said the factory and the prison kitchen would give prisoners skills in food handling, hospitality and forklift driving. Prisoners work in the factory from 8am to 2.30pm on week days preparing stir-fries, coleslaw and soup mixes for the prison kitchen, Royal Hobart Hospital and two Hobart nursing homes.

The Superintendent of Prisons in [St Kitts](#) has detailed the rehabilitative activities available in the main prison. At recreation time the prisoners play football, basketball, cricket, dominoes, chess and card games. On national holidays the prison staff try to organise 'fun days' when the prisoners form teams and have competitions, and they sometimes have folklore activities, including bull and calypso competitions, reggae and poetry competitions and spelling bees. The Superintendent urged the public to support the rehabilitation of prisoners and help them to reintegrate into society on release.

The prisoners' football tournament recently introduced by the [Zimbabwe](#) Prison Service has been commended as a way of rehabilitating the prisoners. The tournament involves teams from various local prisons. For organising the tournament the prisoners received gifts, including colour televisions, football kits and footballs.

Prisoners at Tihar prison complex in [India](#) will soon have the opportunity to learn Spanish, French and Chinese. The programme will begin in the women's jail and a jail comprised mostly of unconvicted prisoners and will be extended to other jails if successful. The course aims at improving the prisoners' future prospects.

A prison for women in Maple Ridge, [Canada](#), that has been expanded to accommodate the highest security prisoners, has been designed so that the women will be able to see what it's like to live in the two lower level security wings. The women held in the 104 'secure custody' cells will be able to see the activities open to those in the medium and open wings, which includes taking care of dogs, working in the garden and undertaking work and life

skills programmes. The hope is that this will inspire the high security prisoners to work towards moving to the lower security levels.

Civic groups in [Taiwan](#) hosted an outdoor bazaar to help ex-prisoners reintegrate into society. Items such as stinky tofu, customised soaps, homemade biscuits, as well as other foods and handicrafts produced by former prisoners, were sold at the event which was organised by the Taiwan After-Care Association. The Association helps prisoners to set up their own businesses on release from prison.

The Department of Corrections in Indiana, [US](#), has stopped offering college classes in prisons and is focusing on vocational training. One example of such training can be seen at the prison in Branchville where prisoners work in a coal mining programme. Eligible prisoners have to come from counties where coal or other kinds of minerals are mined, and they cannot have specified violent or drug related convictions. The Department of Corrections is promoting such programmes because they match prisoners directly with jobs.

More than one in five ex-prisoners in [South Korea](#) is reconvicted within three years of release, according to government data. Experts say that a fundamental change in the rehabilitation programmes offered by prisons is necessary to reduce the high rate of recidivism.

## **Sentencing and the law**

In October 2012 the Chamber of Deputies in the [Italian](#) Parliament approved almost unanimously the bill on the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) which establishes a “double pillar” system of inspecting and monitoring places of detention aiming at preventing torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishments: on the international level, a new treaty body, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, has been created; on the national level, Member States have the obligation to establish special independent bodies, i.e. National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs), within a year from the ratification of the Protocol.

A report by Fair Trials International on criminal justice in the [European Union](#) has found that Greece, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania are the countries which have recorded the most breaches of the individual’s right to liberty and a fair trial over the past five years according to European Court of Human Rights judgments. Delay in bringing cases to trial was the most common reason for critical judgments. In some countries pre-trial detention can last up to four years; others have no legal maximum.

A prisoner at Mountjoy Prison in [Ireland](#) has brought a High Court challenge over his continued detention in the prison’s isolation unit, which his lawyers say amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment. The prisoner was placed in isolation for his own protection in June after he was attacked by other prisoners. He remains in his cell for 23 hours a day and is unable to receive family visits. He is seeking to be released from the segregation unit or transferred to another prison.

In the [US](#), the Governor of California has signed into law a measure that grants juvenile prisoners sentenced to life in prison without parole the chance to petition for their release after 25 years. The courts can review their cases after 15 years in prison and lower their sentence to 25 years to life if the prisoner demonstrates remorse and works towards rehabilitation. Around 300 juvenile prisoners in California are currently serving sentences of life without parole.

A report from [Denmark](#) shows that prison sentences are tougher than ever before, with Justice Ministry statistics showing that in 2001 the average sentence for assault was 69 days. That increased to an average of 90 days in 2011. Sentences for most violent crimes have increased across the board. The longer sentences have contributed to a rise in the prison population, with projections showing that by next year there will be 320 more prisoners than available spaces in the prisons, with the number rising to 460 in 2016 according to the Justice Ministry.

Legislation has been introduced to Parliament in [New Zealand](#) which would create public protection orders to keep violent prisoners and those convicted of sex offences who have 'a very high risk' of 'imminent and serious' offending in prison, indefinitely. They are expected to apply to only up to a dozen prisoners over the next decade and would enable authorities to keep the prisoner in prison until the High Court rules they are safe to be released.

The [Greek](#) Justice Minister is reportedly planning the introduction of tougher restrictions on the issuing of furloughs and conditional release periods to prisoners, as well as the introduction of an electronic monitoring system.

The [Indonesian](#) Law and Human Rights Ministry is preparing a regulation that will guarantee the provision of free legal aid from government selected legal aid organisations for those on low incomes. The draft regulation, which is expected to be ready by January 2013, aims to ensure that no one has to face trial without proper legal assistance.

[Tanzania](#) has launched a legal aid secretariat which will act as a regulatory body for legal aid. The secretariat will initially be for two years and work towards the formulation of a legal aid policy as well as becoming the regulatory body for paralegals. It will be engaged in shaping the future of a permanent and sustainable organisation and will be a platform for sharing ideas and best practice.

A new courtroom has opened at [Lebanon](#)'s Roumieh prison as part of efforts to reduce the number of those held at the prison who have yet to stand trial. According to the Justice Minister 72 percent of those in prison in 2010 had not been tried, with the number falling to 42 percent in 2011.

The Chief Justice of [South Sudan](#) has announced plans for mobile courts to be introduced to tackle the backlog of cases in the country in response to criticism that some people have been held in prison for five years without trial. The Chief Justice said the issue was a lack of judges and judicial infrastructure as the country only has 120 judges to serve a population of more than eight million and that there are no formal courts outside of the cities.

A video conferencing system has been launched in the [Bahamas](#) as part of the country's Swift Justice initiative, which is designed to speed up court matters and reduce the backlog of cases. The virtual system will allow for bail applications, remand hearings, arraignments and criminal case management to be conducted via video link or videoconferences.

Official figures from [Panama](#) show that the Accusatory Penal System (SPA), which was introduced last year, has increased efficiency in the country's justice system by 70 percent. Under the previous inquisitorial system a legal proceeding took an average of 172 days. Under the SPA the average has dropped to 58 days. Use of the mediation process and alternate conflict resolution measures has also expedited the resolution of cases, allowing officials to dedicate resources to more serious cases. The SPA is now being rolled out across the country.

Following perceived violations of the rights to life and a fair trial in [The Gambia](#), a coalition of civil society organisations in the country has filed an application with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court. The suit was filed on behalf of 38 death row prisoners, and calls on the Court 'to order the Republic of The Gambia to comply with the rights and principles of the African Charter on Human Rights, stop executing death sentences and stop pronouncing death sentences.' The suit comes after nine prisoners were executed by firing squad in August, the first executions in the country since 1985.

In [Singapore](#) amendments to two statutes have been tabled which would remove the mandatory death penalty for some types of homicide and drug trafficking offences. Proposed changes to the Penal Code would see only those convicted of intentional killing sentenced to death. For other types of homicide the Government is seeking to give judges the discretion to impose life imprisonment with caning. In the Bill tabled to amend the Misuse of Drugs Act, the death penalty will not be automatic for convicted drug traffickers when two "specific, tightly-defined conditions" are both met. First, the trafficker must have only played the role of courier and must not have been involved in any other activity related to the supply or distribution of drugs. Second, he must either suffer from a mental disability which substantially impairs his appreciation of the gravity of the act, or he has cooperated with the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) in a "substantive" way. Judges can order life imprisonment with at least 15 strokes of the cane, instead of death, for traffickers who meet both requirements.

## **Prison policy**

[China](#) has given foreign journalists rare access to a prison in an attempt to show its progress in improving human rights. The journalists were given a tour of No. 1 Detention Centre in Beijing, where they saw brightly painted cells, psychological counselling rooms, medical facilities and the visiting area. However they were not allowed to meet any prisoners.

The [Zambian](#) Prisons Services Commissioner has urged journalists to increase their reporting on prisons to help society and the government have a more informed perception of what happens inside them. The Commissioner said the information would help society know how it could benefit from some of the activities done in prisons and how other organisations work in the criminal justice system.

A group of prison guards in [Chile](#) staged a protest outside the National Congress building to demand that the government help to reform and professionalise the country's prison guard service. The protest comes as the service is under heavy scrutiny for the accidental shooting of a civilian, an incident the guards say could have been avoided if the government had invested in proper training measures. The National Association of Non-commissioned Prison Guards sees as vital the need to professionalise the service, improve the career prospects of its workers and provide sufficient incentives to cover the risks associated with the work.

The [Canadian](#) government is cancelling the contracts of all non-Christian chaplains at federal prisons. Instead, Christian chaplains will provide services to all prisoners and will coordinate the pastoral care of minority faith prisoners by requesting local clergy to volunteer their services.

Plans to construct a nursery at the Women's Prison in [Trinidad](#) have been approved. The Inspector of Prisons says that the move will help to preserve the family unit and reflect the international human rights standards on the treatment of prisoners.

Wealthy prisoners in the [Dominican Republic](#) have had perks, including laptops, TV antennas and air conditioning units, removed from their cells after authorities decided they should not receive special treatment that was not available to other prisoners. None of the country's 21 prisons have general air conditioning and the majority of the 22,000 prisoners are barred from having laptops and other items.

The [New Zealand](#) Corrections Minister wants to introduce new standards for public prisons which would see their performance compared to those run privately. Currently the country's only private prison operator, Serco, faces financial penalties if it fails to meet targets set by the government. The Minister wants to bring that same level of accountability to the public sector, albeit without the financial penalties.

[Zambia and Malawi](#) have begun implementing the resolution of the Joint Permanent Commission Memorandum of Understanding on reformation of prisoners by exchanging convicted prisoners serving various sentences to complete the remainder of their custodial sentences in their home country. It is hoped that the initiative will help to reduce congestion in the prisons and that being closer to their families will enable the prisoners to reintegrate more successfully back into their communities.

The [Iranian](#) government and police have begun employing women as guards at female prisons across the country with the aim of reducing abuses in the prisons. The women will be trained in such areas as physical inspections, transportation of prisoners and maintaining order in the prisons. The initiative has been introduced following a number of reports of abuse of female prisoners by male guards.

A spokesman for the Directorate General of Prisons in [Saudi Arabia](#) has reported that a number of female prisoners remain in prison after their sentence has expired because their guardians refuse to receive them. This has led to many unmarried women prisoners



accepting any male as her suitor just so that she can acquire a male guardian who can sign her out of prison when her sentence ends.

A prisoner in [Belgium](#) has become the first to be euthanised. The case has provoked controversy in the media – not over euthanasia but over the violation of the prisoner's right to privacy. All of the conditions for euthanasia in Belgium were carefully fulfilled: the prisoner had a terminal illness, he had made repeated requests to die, and three doctors had independently ratified the request.

Without citing any security related needs or problems, the [US](#) state of Alabama has decided to require visitors at prisons to undergo fingerprinting. No other state in the country has such a requirement. The Alabama Department of Corrections says the new policy is a product of expanded capability and the need for greater efficiency. Critics called the policy 'extreme' and said it is an unnecessary barrier to visiting prisoners.

The state government in Queensland, [Australia](#), has confirmed plans to cut back on the number of days prisoners work, reducing the cost to taxpayers for supervising the work. The budget papers state that the government will achieve savings of \$12.1 million over four years from a reduction in the operation of prison industry activities from seven days a week to five. The announcement triggered industrial action by guards.

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