



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

37th Edition – January – February 2017

Welcome to the 37th edition of the International Prison News Digest, our selection of news items from around the world on prison and the use of imprisonment. The Digest is produced bi-monthly and this issue covers the period from 1 January to 28 February 2017.

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

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

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

WORLD

Around three million people are held in pre-trial detention and other forms of remand imprisonment throughout the world, according to the third edition of the World Pre-trial/Remand Imprisonment List, published by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research. [ICPR, 23 February 2017](#)

Highlighting the challenges presented by violent extremism and radicalization in prisons and the need to address them, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has published a new manual that offers practical advice on managing violent extremist prisoners, disengaging them from violence and facilitating their social reintegration upon release. [UN.org, 16 January 2017](#)

AFRICA

Benin: Prisoners on death row are languishing in a cruel limbo after a court decision last year effectively abolished the death penalty, but failed to commute existing death sentences, said Amnesty International in a new report. [Amnesty.org, 16 January 2017](#)

Burundi: Burundi has begun releasing a quarter of its jail population under a mass presidential pardon, but prisoners' rights groups have voiced concern they are just making room for more political prisoners. [News 24, 23 January 2017](#)

Ethiopia: Oromia State has granted an amnesty to 10,000 prisoners who fulfilled the requirements and expressed regret at their wrongdoings. [All Africa, 5 January 2017](#)

Kenya: An audit report into the country's criminal justice system shows a high number of poor people are being jailed compared to the rich, and that more than 75 per cent of prisoners are aged between 18 and 35, with a majority of them being petty offenders. [Standard Media, 24 January 2017](#)

Liberia: Monrovia Central Prison has begun rejecting suspects committed by the court to the prison on the grounds that only those suspected of serious crimes would be accepted due to a shortage of space. [Front Page Africa, 10 January 2017](#)

South Africa: Correctional Services National Commissioner Zach Modise has appealed to government security agencies to reduce overcrowding in the country's correctional facilities. [News 24, 18 January 2017](#)

South Africa: Sentenced prisoners at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town will be transferred to correctional centres outside the city and province as part of a mammoth effort to reduce severe overcrowding. [All Africa, 30 January 2017](#)

South Africa: The Minister of Justice and Correctional Services has introduced a Bill which seeks to stop the incarceration of accused persons who are mentally ill or intellectually disabled. [All Africa, 10 February 2017](#)

Tunisia: The Justice Minister has sounded the alarm over the "catastrophic" conditions of prisoners in the country's overcrowded prisons. [The North Africa Post, 3 January 2017](#)

Uganda: Prisoners at Masaka Prison have protested the harsher court sentences imposed on them instead of the lesser penalties agreed upon under the new Plea Bargain justice system. [All Africa, 14 February 2017](#)

Zimbabwe: A typhoid outbreak in Harare has reportedly hit Chikurubi Security Maximum and Harare Central prisons with an unconfirmed number of prisoners said to have died. [New Zimbabwe, 17 January 2017](#)

AMERICAS

Brazil: A riot in an overcrowded prison in northern Brazil has left at least 56 prisoners dead, many of them decapitated. [BBC News, 2 January 2017](#)

Brazil: In the last two years the federal government has reduced by 85% the funding transferred to States for the construction of new prison facilities as well as reducing the resources available for restructuring and modernizing existing facilities. [Folha de S.Paulo, 4 January 2017](#)

Brazil: Four days after one of the bloodiest prison riots Brazil has witnessed, another prison riot in Brazil's Amazon region has left at least 33 prisoners dead. [Rio Times, 6 January 2017](#)

Brazil: Four prisoners were killed in a new prison riot in Amazonas, northern Brazil - the third such riot in the country since January 1st. [Plus 55, 8 January 2017](#)

Brazil: Twenty-six prisoners were killed in eruptions of violence inside two prisons in northern Brazil. [The Telegraph, 16 January 2017](#)

Brazil: Brazil's Supreme Court ruled Thursday that prisoners in the country's heavily overcrowded prisons are entitled to compensation from the state, after an ex-prisoner brought his case to the court. [Telesur, 18 February 2017](#)

Canada: Giving clean drug-injection needles to prisoners to stem the spread of infectious disease would make federal penitentiaries more dangerous places, senior correctional officials say. [Thestar.com, 17 January 2017](#)

Canada: Teaching prisoners to build office chairs and sew isn't preparing those incarcerated in federal institutions for the modern job market, says Canada's prison watchdog. [CBC News, 27 January 2017](#)

Colombia: Colombia's Ombudsman has called for the closure of some of the nation's prisons due to extreme overcrowding and a chronic humanitarian crisis that is unfolding. [Colombia Reports, 28 February 2017](#)

Guyana: Guyana has tapped into a US\$8 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to help reduce prison overcrowding and speed up the delivery of justice. [Demerara Waves, 22 February 2017](#)

Haiti: Overcrowding, malnutrition and infectious diseases that flourish in prisons have led to an upsurge of prisoner deaths. [The Grand Island Independent, 20 February 2017](#)

Haiti: Haiti has announced a new government commission to examine the country's prisons and other overcrowded lockups and make recommendations to improve the desperate conditions for prisoners. [The Washington Post, 24 February 2017](#)

Jamaica: The Justice Minister is moving to have justice centres established in each parish to provide training for justices of the peace (JPs) in the areas of restorative justice, mediation and child diversion. [Jamaica Observer, 6 January 2017](#)

Jamaica: The National Security Ministry has announced that all correctional officers and recruits are to be polygraphed as part of new measures aimed at cutting the smuggling of cell phones and other contraband into correctional facilities. [Jamaica Gleaner, 28 February 2017](#)

United States: The US imprisonment rate has been declining for almost a decade, yet the number of women in prison at the end of 2015 is virtually identical to what it was when the de-incarceration trend began. [The Washington Post, 24 January 2017](#)

United States: The number of US prisoners serving life sentences has more than quadrupled over the past three decades, and those eligible for parole are waiting longer to be released. [The Baltimore Sun, 31 January 2017](#)

Venezuela: Venezuela's prisons, which are rife with violence, weapons, drugs and criminality, have been placed under a new, tightly regulated regime, says the nation's leftist government. [Latin America Herald Tribune, 17 February 2017](#)

ASIA

Cambodia: More than 1,000 people have been arrested in the first dozen days of the government's drug crackdown, in what critics have labelled a heavy-handed campaign that could have unintended consequences. [The Phnom Penh Post, 13 January 2017](#)

Cambodia: Cambodia's already swollen prison population leapt by more than 20 percent last year, according to the Ministry of Interior's annual report. [The Phnom Penh Post, 23 February 2017](#)

Japan: Justice Minister Katsutoshi Kaneda has consulted an advisory panel about the possibility of lowering the age of criminal adulthood from 20 to 18. [Japan Times, 10 February 2017](#)

Myanmar: Myanmar is expanding its prison capacity in an effort to relieve chronic overcrowding pressures. [Myanmar Times, 2 February 2017](#)

Nepal: At least 11 prisoners died within the first 5 months of the fiscal year due to a lack of proper medical treatment and government hospitals failing to provide free treatment for prisoners. [The Kathmandu Post, 13 January 2017](#)

Nepal: A parliamentary panel is close to finalizing a bill on sentencing, which envisions an open jail system for the first time in the country. [My Republica, 19 January 2017](#)

Philippines: A law proposing children as young as nine be jailed for crimes is “wrong from every angle”, the head of the United Nations children’s agency in the Philippines has warned. [The Guardian, 13 February 2017](#)

Singapore: The number of former prisoners who break the law again within two years of their release has remained low and stable, the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) has said. [Channel News Asia, 14 February 2017](#)

Taiwan: Taiwan’s first renewable energy prison is set to begin generating power this year, with an estimated capacity of one million kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year. [Taipei Times, 8 February 2017](#)

Thailand: Thailand’s prisons fail to meet international standards, with prisoners routinely shackled, stuffed into overcrowded cells and forced to work in harsh conditions, according to an international human rights group. [Salon.com, 28 February 2017](#)

EUROPE

Belgium: Figures communicated by the boards of management of the Flemish and French-speaking remand prisons indicate that in 2016, a total of 5,600 individuals had an electronic tagging bracelet, down from over 6,000 in 2015. [The Brussels Times, 10 January 2017](#)

Belgium: The federal government is investing billions of euros in building new prisons but there is a lack of financial investment in the rehabilitation of prisoners and detention conditions do not meet international recommendations. [The Brussels Times, 18 January 2017](#)

Cyprus: The justice ministry has announced that two bills have been prepared to amend existing legislation so as to provide discretion to the court to sentence persons who owe small amounts of money to community work instead of jail. [Cyprus Mail, 14 January 2017](#)

Czech Republic: Only two types of prisons, with usual and maximum security, will be in the Czech Republic under the amendment to the criminal code and the law on serving the prison sentence passed by the Senate, which will abolish the existing four types of prisons. [Prague Daily Monitor, 19 January 2017](#)

Finland: The proportion of foreign prisoners in Finnish prisons has increased by 56 percent in the past decade. [YLE, 23 February 2017](#)

Ireland: Life sentence prisoners released in 2016 served an average 22 years in custody, an increase of four-and-a-half years on 2015. [The Irish Times, 30 January 2017](#)

Netherlands: Electronic tagging is being increasingly used as a punishment in the Netherlands, particular for people convicted of robbery and drug-related crime. [Dutch News, 4 January 2017](#)

Russia: Russia has ordered a prisoner to pay his own medical costs after he went on hunger strike over jail conditions, a move that could curb protests against poor treatment of convicts. [The Journal, 13 February 2017](#)

Turkey: Overpopulation in Turkish prisons in the aftermath of the July 15, 2016 coup attempt has led the Turkish Justice Ministry to introduce new regulations that would improve prison conditions for prisoners serving less than 10 years in prison. [Hurriyet Daily News, 23 February 2017](#)

UNITED KINGDOM

England and Wales: A British triple-killer has lost a challenge at the European Court of Human Rights against his whole-life prison term. [BBC News, 17 January 2017](#)

England and Wales: A record number of people killed themselves in prisons in England and Wales in 2016, official figures show. [Independent, 26 January 2017](#)

England and Wales: The government's chief inspector of prisons has delivered a damning assessment of the state of the jail system and laid half the blame at the highest level. [Politics Home, 31 January 2017](#)

England and Wales: Prisons are holding child prisoners in solitary confinement in an alleged breach of UN torture rules and British law, The Independent has found. [The Independent, 21 February 2017](#)

England and Wales: Prison governors are to be held to account for getting offenders off drugs, into jobs and learning English and maths. [The Guardian, 23 February 2017](#)

Jersey: Giving Jersey prisoners the right to vote is 'the right thing to do', according to the head of Jersey's Probation Service. [ITV.com, 18 January 2017](#)

Northern Ireland: The number of deaths in the prison system doubled in the past year, from 3 in 2015 to 6 in 2016. [The Irish News, 4 January 2017](#)

Northern Ireland: Nearly 80 prison officers were attacked in Northern Ireland during the past year, new figures have revealed. [Belfast Telegraph, 10 January 2017](#)

Scotland: A new law to stop prisoners waiting days for support on leaving jail has only been used just once in the year since its launch. [STV News, 4 February 2017](#)

Scotland: Scotland's worst criminals would die in jail under plans for whole-life sentences to be examined by MSPs. [Herald Scotland, 23 February 2017](#)

OCEANIA

Australia: Thousands of Victorians could avoid prison terms under a major state government campaign to reduce reoffending rates, and improve the rehabilitation of offenders. [The Age, 16 January 2017](#)

Australia: The number of assaults in overcrowded New South Wales prisons has soared by 37 per cent in the past two years, as the prison population reaches a record high. [The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January 2017](#)

Australia: Courts across Australia are facing a growing backlog of criminal cases, with hundreds taking longer than a year to process. [The Guardian, 30 January 2017](#)

Australia: Independent inspections at youth prisons or immigration detention centres will be permitted after the Turnbull government pledged to ratify a United Nations treaty in a bid to stamp out torture. [The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 February 2017](#)

Australia: Some Aboriginal people are being kept in custody for longer than required because of a lack of interpreters in South Australia, lawyers representing Indigenous people claim. [ABC News, 28 February 2017](#)

New Zealand: An increase in prisoner numbers is being given as a reason for the Mount Eden Correctional Facility having the highest rates of attempted suicides and self harm incidents in the country's jails. [Newstalk ZB, 18 January 2017](#)