



INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

38th Edition – March - April 2017

Welcome to the 38th 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 March to 30 April 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

Overcrowding, inhumane and degrading detention conditions and disproportionate harm to marginalised groups are some of the consequences of the rapid, unrelenting growth of imprisonment worldwide, according to *Prison: Evidence of its use and over-use from around the world*, published by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, Birkbeck, University of London, and the NGO, Fair Trials. [ICPR, 16 March 2017](#)

AFRICA

Gambia: Almost 100 prisoners have been freed from Gambian jails as the new government struggles to reform an overcrowded system that long relied on strict mandatory sentencing. [Daily Nation, 4 March 2017](#)

Kenya: Kenya will now have 12 maximum security prisons after a Government move to upgrade seven more penitentiaries to this category. [Standard, 20 March 2017](#)

Liberia: The Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) has released a report on the 'deteriorating' conditions of prisons across the country. [All Africa, 27 April 2017](#)

Sierra Leone: The lack of vehicles to transport prisoners between Correctional Centres and the Courts is leading to delays in the judicial process and unnecessary jail time for prisoners. [Awoko, 1 March 2017](#)

AMERICAS

Brazil: Seven prisoners have died in a penitentiary in a northern Brazilian state where riots left dozens of prisoners dead earlier this year. [Yahoo, 9 April 2017](#)

Brazil: Five prisoners have died in a prison riot Tuesday in the central-western Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. [New Zealand Herald, 12 April 2017](#)

Canada: Canada's prison system is holding fewer prisoners in solitary confinement, and for shorter periods of time. [CBCNews, 14 March 2017](#)

Canada: Ontario is facing a \$600-million lawsuit on behalf of thousands of mentally ill prisoners who have served time in solitary confinement since 1985. [The Globe and Mail, 21 April 2017](#)

Costa Rica: Costa Rica is building three new Comprehensive Care Units that will host 1,600 prisoners in spaces suitable for work and study. [The Costa Rica Star, 16 March 2017](#)

Guatemala: The Guatemalan President has inaugurated the penitentiary management model's first rehabilitation and reintegration center for some 160 female prisoners. [Latin American Herald Tribune, 7 March 2017](#)

Guatemala: Two jail monitors were killed and several other people suffered injuries after a riot erupted at a prison for juveniles and adults. [CTV News, 20 March 2017](#)

Haiti: Prisoners in Haiti are subjected to "daily violations" of their fundamental rights, mostly stemming from egregious prison overcrowding resulting from the overuse of lengthy preventive detention. [Jamaica Observer, 9 March 2017](#)

Mexico: Mexican prisons are plagued with major problems in their operations and security, and overpopulation is the chief cause. [Mexico News Daily, 21 March 2017](#)

United States: Prisoners on Louisiana's death row are confined in inhumane isolation for 23 hours a day in windowless cells "the size of an average home bathroom," according to a lawsuit challenging the practice. [US News, 29 March 2017](#)

United States: After a period of steady growth, the number of prisoners held in private prisons in the United States has declined modestly in recent years. [Pew Research Center, 11 April 2017](#)

Venezuela: A prison riot in Venezuela's eastern state of Anzoategui has left at least 12 people dead and 11 wounded. [Reuters, 26 April 2017](#)

ASIA

Indonesia: The number of prisoners being held in Indonesia increased by 12,000 within two months this year, raising concerns about unresolved prison overcrowding problems. [The Jakarta Post, 11 April 2017](#)

Israel: Prison authorities decided to allow a homosexual prisoner a conjugal visit with his male partner for the first time in Israel. [Times of Israel, 25 April 2017](#)

Myanmar: Prisoners continue to conduct hard labour in shackles in a Mon State labour camp despite calls for reforms by lawmakers. [Frontier Myanmar, 5 March 2017](#)

Philippines: Photos showing hundreds of prisoners in a Philippine jail sitting naked while being searched for contraband have triggered accusations of further rights abuses in President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly war on drugs. [Today, 2 March 2017](#)

Singapore: The number of elderly prisoners has almost doubled in the past five years, and the Singapore Prison Service has retrofitted some prison cells with senior-friendly features like grab bars and handrails. [The Straits Times, 13 March 2017](#)

Singapore: The Singapore Prison Service has outlined plans to launch its "prisons without guards" concept. [International Business Times, 13 April 2017](#)

EUROPE

Europe: The number of people held in European prisons decreased by 6.8% from 2014 to 2015, although prison overcrowding remained a problem in 15 countries. [Council of Europe, 14 March 2017](#)

Armenia: Armenia has the highest rate of mortality in prisons among all European countries. [Azernews, 15 March 2017](#)

Cyprus: The director of Cyprus' prisons complex says no prisoners have committed suicide over the last two years following sweeping reforms in the nation's correctional system. Ekathimerini.com, 14 March 2017

Czech Republic: It is necessary that new prisons be built in order to make the present ones less overcrowded and help improve conditions, according to Justice Minister Robert Pelikan. Prague Monitor, 3 April 2017

Denmark: The eight prisoners who committed suicide in Danish prisons in 2016 is a quadrupling of the previous year and the highest figure since the prison and probation service began keeping track 11 years ago. CPHPost, 9 March 2017

Ireland: Forty-nine prisoners were still slopping out in Irish prisons as of January 2017, Justice Minister Frances Fitzgerald has confirmed. Irish Legal, 3 March 2017

Ireland: Prisoners sleep on mattresses as new €44m Cork Prison runs out of space. 19 March 2017

Ireland: Prisoners in juvenile detention centres cost the Irish State almost 10 times the European average in 2014, according to the Council of Europe. Irish Times, 15 March 2017

Ireland: The number of people being jailed has reached its lowest level since 2008 after a major drop in committals last year, figures show. Irish Examiner, 21 March 2017

Malta: An amendment to the criminal code to remove the minimum five-year prison sentence in cases of involuntary homicide with more than one victim has been approved by the parliamentary committee for the consideration of bills. Malta Today, 20 March 2017

Romania: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has given the Romanian state six months to present a plan of measures to address overcrowding and prison conditions. New Europe, 25 April 2017

Russia: The number of people in Russian penitentiary facilities has fallen to the lowest level since the collapse of the USSR, according to the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN). Tass, 10 March 2017

Slovakia: The introduction of electronic bracelets in the prison service has not solved the problem of the low rate of imposition of alternative sentences and insufficient capacity of the Slovak prisons. The Slovak Spectator, 14 March 2017

Ukraine: A total of 144 prisoners and convicts have died at Ukrainian correctional facilities in the first three months of 2017. Interfax Ukraine, 3 April 2017

UNITED KINGDOM

England and Wales: Prison psychiatrists are feeling so frightened at work that many are finding it "impossible" to provide a basic level of care to prisoners. The Guardian, 11 March 2017

England and Wales: The justice secretary has announced plans to build four new “supersized” jails in England and Wales, creating a total of 5,000 modern prison places. [The Guardian, 22 March 2017](#)

England and Wales: The prisons and probation ombudsman has hit out at a “lack of concerted and sustained action” following a rise in the number of suicides among female prisoners. [The Guardian, 28 March 2017](#)

England and Wales: The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture has raised serious concerns over the lack of safety for prisoners and staff in prisons in England. [Council of Europe, 19 April 2017](#)

England and Wales: Two thirds of prisons in England and Wales are overcrowded, Government figures have revealed. [Independent, 15 April 2017](#)

England and Wales: The scale of the prison crisis in England and Wales is revealed by the latest annual figures showing a 38% rise in assaults on staff and a 24% rise in self-harm incidents in the past year to record levels. [The Guardian, 27 April 2017](#)

Scotland: An over-reliance on short custodial sentences is undermining government reforms for female offenders, a campaign group has said. [The National, 8 March 2017](#)

Scotland: Prisoners must have more support as they transition from jail to the outside world, the chief inspector of prisons has said. [STV News, 16 March 2017](#)

OCEANIA

Australia: Children are routinely and inappropriately locked down in their cells and subject to unacceptable levels of isolation within Victoria’s youth justice system. [The Guardian, 23 March 2017](#)

Australia: A prison slated for construction in northern New South Wales will have beds for a total of 1,700 men, women and minimum security prisoners and will be the largest correctional facility in the country. [ABC News, 16 March 2017](#)

New Zealand: New Zealand’s prisons inspection regime is being strengthened, with the Government announcing regular reviews of all prisons and a new inspection team. [Stuff.co.nz, 2 March 2017](#)

New Zealand: A bulging prisoner population is putting “significant pressure” on existing jails, prompting fast-tracked construction of new accommodation blocks across the country. [Stuff.co.nz, 28 March 2017](#)

New Zealand: New Zealand’s high use of seclusion and restraints in prisons and other facilities has been criticised in an international report on the practices. [Radio NZ, 27 April 2017](#)