

INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

55th Edition – January – February 2020

Welcome to the 55th 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 – 29 February 2020.

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. News items are grouped regionally. By clicking on the hyperlinks, you can access the news articles in their original form.

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

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

AFRICA

Democratic Republic of Congo: Eleven prisoners died in the first week of the year in Kinshasa's biggest prison, staff and NGO sources have said, blaming shortages of drugs and food. [News 24, 7 January 2020](#)

Zimbabwe: At least 5,000 prisoners are set to be released this year following completion of paperwork under the amnesty programme. [ZimEye, 9 February 2020](#)

AMERICAS

Canada: Canada's prison ombudsman says disturbing and entrenched imbalances mean the proportion of Indigenous people in federal custody has hit a record high of more than 30 per cent. [660 City News, 21 January 2020](#)

Canada: Canada's top court has agreed to hear arguments on the constitutionality of prolonged solitary confinement. [The Globe and Mail, 13 February 2020](#)

Canada: Canada's prisons recently recorded the highest number of use of force incidents ever according to the prison watchdog. [News Optimist, 25 February 2020](#)

Mexico: At least 16 prisoners were killed after a riot broke out at a prison in central Mexico. [BBC News, 1 January 2020](#)

Panama: A report on prison security has highlighted severe deficiencies in Panama's penitentiary system. [660 City News, 8 January 2020](#)

Paraguay: Seventy-five prisoners escaped from a jail in eastern Paraguay near the border with Brazil. [BBC News, 19 January 2020](#)

United States: The number of people serving life in prison exceeds the entire prison population of 1970, according to a new report published by The Sentencing Project. [The Crime Report, 25 February 2020](#)

United States: Women in prison often receive disproportionately harsher punishments for minor violations of prison rules than men, according to a report released by a federal fact-finding agency. [NPR, 26 February 2020](#)

Venezuela: Gang fighting at a jail in Venezuela has left at least 10 prisoners dead. [FMT News, 1 January 2020](#)

ASIA

Afghanistan: The government has approved a reform policy that will allow for proper law enforcement in Afghanistan's prisons. [Mena FN, 8 January 2020](#)

Cambodia: Prey Sar prison management has said it can no longer afford to house suspects held in pre-trial detention due to overcrowding. [Khmer Times, 21 January 2020](#)

Indonesia: Prisoners set fire to an overcrowded prison on Indonesia's Sumatra island during a riot, officials said. [ABC News, 12 February 2020](#)

Myanmar: The Ministry of Health and Sports said it hopes to implement better health care in all prisons across the country by 2025. [Myanmar Times, 13 January 2020](#)

Nepal: The Prison Bill tabled at the House of Representatives empowers all jailers to develop and enforce a code of ethics to be observed by staff, security personnel and prisoners. [The Himalayan Times, 20 February 2020](#)

Philippines: The Justice Sector has launched a unified database that will organise the country's problematic record-keeping of prisoners. [Inquirer.net, 10 January 2020](#)

Thailand: The cabinet has approved measures to ease overcrowding in prisons across the country that include introducing bunk beds for prisoners. [Bangkok Post, 29 January 2020](#)

EUROPE

Belgium: The federal justice ministry last year paid out €242,601 to people who had been detained on remand awaiting trial and later released, the ministry has reported. [The Brussels Times, 29 February 2020](#)

Croatia: During a parliamentary debate, members of parliament warned about prison overcrowding and poor prison conditions. [Total Croatia News, 31 January 2020](#)

Cyprus: More educational programmes are needed in prison to help with prisoners' reintegration into society, the House Education committee has said. [Cyprus Mail, 9 January 2020](#)

Denmark: Even just a few days of solitary confinement may significantly increase prisoners' risk of death after serving their sentences according to new research. [EurekAlert, 5 February 2020](#)

France: The European Court of Human Rights has ordered France to pay thousands of euros in damages to dozens of prisoners after ruling that authorities had not taken sufficient measures to end prison overcrowding. [France 24, 30 January 2020](#)

Hungary: The Hungarian government has suspended the payment of compensation to prisoners for the poor conditions in which they have been kept. [Hungary Today, 16 January 2020](#)

Ireland: Disabled prisoners are often left isolated in their cells due to a lack of supports, with one prisoner unable to leave his cell because a walking stick was not available, a new report has found. [The Irish Times, 15 January 2020](#)

Ireland: There is a backlog in inspecting prison deaths with the Inspector of Prisons encountering resource and legal difficulties. [Leinster Express, 17 January 2020](#)

Italy: The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has published a report recommending the abolition of the court-imposed measure of solitary confinement for persons sentenced to life imprisonment. [Council of Europe, 21 January 2020](#)

Russia: The second of at least 17 Russian prison guards charged in a high-profile prisoner torture case has been sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison. [RFERL, 17 January 2020](#)

UNITED KINGDOM

England and Wales: Hundreds of children are alleged to have been abused and neglected in prison over the last three years amid a dramatic rise in young offenders being injured. [Independent, 11 January 2020](#)

England and Wales: Investigations into alleged misconduct by prison staff have risen by a third in a year, figures have revealed. [BBC News, 13 January 2020](#)

England and Wales: Campaigners have called on the government to end 'pointless' short prison sentences, as new official figures show that nine prisons are over capacity by more than 50%. [Left Foot Forward, 13 January 2020](#)

England and Wales: The number of prisoners developing drug problems has more than doubled in five years, figures show, fuelling concerns about the state of prisons in England and Wales. [Independent, 20 January 2020](#)

England and Wales: Children are being held in "harmful" solitary confinement in prison with some let out of their cells for just 15 minutes a day, a report from jail inspectors said. [The Guardian, 21 January 2020](#)

England and Wales: The persistently high death toll in prisons is a "national scandal", with too many deaths avoidable, according to a new report. [The Guardian, 22 January 2020](#)

England and Wales: Prisoners frequently have hospital appointments cancelled and receive less healthcare than the general public, a new study has found. [Independent, 25 February 2020](#)

Jersey: Eight prisoners at Jersey's La Moye Prison have moved into a self-care wing, to learn vital skills ahead of their phased release. [ITV.com, 22 February 2020](#)

Scotland: Exploratory research into the reasons behind decisions on bail and remand has been commissioned to support work to reduce the number of people on pre-trial and pre-sentencing remand in the prison system. [Scottish Government, 25 January 2020](#)

Scotland: MSPs say "urgent action" is needed to address the pressure on Scotland's overcrowded prisons. [BBC News, 20 February 2020](#)

OCEANIA

Australia: Almost one-in-two Australian adults released from prison are back behind bars within two years, the Productivity Commission has found. [The Canberra Times, 29 January 2020](#)

New Zealand: White supremacist prisoners are a rising force in New Zealand prisons, new figures show. [Stuff.co.nz, 4 January 2020](#)

New Zealand: Across the country the number of serious self-harm incidents has rapidly risen, as the Government pumps millions of dollars into mental health support for prisoners. [Otago Daily Times, 13 January 2020](#)

New Zealand: A study of prisoners at Christchurch women's prison has found nearly every woman interviewed had a history of multiple traumatic brain injuries. [RNZ, 29 January 2020](#)

New Zealand: The Government rejected Justice Ministry advice to allow all prisoners to vote, even though it would best uphold human rights and fulfil Treaty of Waitangi obligations. [NZ Herald, 26 February 2020](#)

Papua New Guinea: More than 60 prisoners remained at large after a mass prison break-out in Papua New Guinea that left eight prisoners dead and another eight injured. [News.com.au, 27 February 2020](#)