

# INTERNATIONAL PRISON NEWS DIGEST

## 54<sup>th</sup> Edition – November - December 2019

Welcome to the 54<sup>th</sup> 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 November – 31 December 2019.

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

**Ghana:** Only two doctors are providing medical services to over 15,000 prisoners in the 46 prisons across the country. [GhanaWeb, 11 November 2019](#)

**South Africa:** The Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS) says it is concerned about the number of unnatural deaths in prison. [IOL, 29 November 2019](#)

**South Africa:** President Cyril Ramaphosa has approved the release of 14,647 offenders on pardons and remissions to mark Reconciliation Day. [Eyewitness News, 16 December 2019](#)

**Tanzania:** The Tanzanian President has pardoned a record 5,533 prisoners serving jail terms across the east African nation, saying the move was aimed at easing congestion in prisons. [Xinhua, 9 December 2019](#)

**Tanzania:** The President has directed state organs to cooperate in speeding up court proceedings in order to reduce the number of remandees in the country's prisons. [All Africa, 19 December 2019](#)

## AMERICAS

**Brazil:** Brazil's Supreme Court has ruled to end the mandatory imprisonment of convicted criminals after they lose their first appeal. [Reuters, 8 November 2019](#)

**Honduras:** Honduras has declared a state of emergency in its prison system, suspending its civilian leaders and replacing them with a special commission led by military officers. [AP, 17 December 2019](#)

**Honduras:** At least 16 prisoners have been killed in a fight between rival gangs at a Honduran prison, less than two days after deadly violence at another jail. [BBC News, 23 December 2019](#)

**Mexico:** Insufficient personnel, poor hygiene and deficiencies in health services and rehabilitation programs are among the problems in Mexico's prisons. [Mexico News Daily, 8 November 2019](#)

**Panama:** At least 12 people were killed and another 13 were injured during a shootout among prisoners at a jail near Panama City. [Reuters, 18 December 2019](#)

**United States:** More than 450 prisoners in Oklahoma were released in one day, marking the largest single-day commutation in U.S. history. [CBS News, 4 November 2019](#)

**United States:** The corrections corporation GEO Group has filed a lawsuit challenging a California bill that will ban for-profit prison contracts. [Los Angeles Times, 31 December 2019](#)

## ASIA

**Bangladesh:** A new report says that there are only 10 physicians for the 68 prisons across the country, where 131 posts are now vacant. [Dhaka Tribune, 6 November 2019](#)

**Cambodia:** The General Department of Prisons has dismissed a report made by rights group Licadho which claimed there are violations of basic human rights in the Kingdom's prisons. [Khmer Times, 28 November 2019](#)

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong's correctional services should improve living conditions for prisoners and the system for making complaints before investing in so-called smart prisons, a human rights group says. [Yahoo News, 30 December 2019](#)

**India:** The Law Minister has appealed to the chief justices of all 25 high courts to ensure the expeditious trial and release of undertrials who have completed 50 per cent of their proposed sentence. [Millennium Post, 28 November 2019](#)

**Iran:** The parliamentary legal affairs commission has decided not to separate the country's prison system from the Judiciary. [Radio Farda, 12 November 2019](#)

**Japan:** A prison in western Japan has introduced a unique rehabilitation program that helps prisoners recognize the pain their crimes caused by facilitating a forum in which they can understand their victims' experiences. [Kyodo News, 14 December 2019](#)

**Malaysia:** The government may consider setting up privately-managed prisons to solve the overcrowding problem in Malaysian jails. [The Star, 22 November 2019](#)

**Nepal:** With prisons across the country seeing a steady rise in the number of prisoners, communicable diseases have emerged as a serious health hazard. [My Republica, 7 November 2019](#)

**Nepal:** The government is pushing a bill paving the way for the provinces to take responsibility for the management of various prisons. [My Republica, 9 November 2019](#)

**Pakistan:** The Punjab government has announced it will establish an 'inspectorate of correctional and custodial service' in the province to monitor facilities in prisons. [Dawn, 14 November 2019](#)

**Pakistan:** The government of Sindh has decided to commute the sentences of elderly and ailing jail prisoners. [Pakistan Today, 22 November 2019](#)

**Philippines:** Conditions inside the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) have reached a "critical" level with one prisoner dying every day, the state penitentiary's new hospital chief said. [Rappler, 13 November 2019](#)

**Philippines:** The Senate approved on third and final reading a proposal to build a separate "state-of-the-art" prison facility for those convicted of high-level heinous crimes. [PhilStar Global, 16 December 2019](#)

**Thailand:** The Corrections Department has linked up with a university and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to help train and improve the vocational skills of prisoners. [Xinhua, 12 December 2019](#)

## EUROPE

**Europe:** The Council of Europe has issued a new set of Guidelines aimed at assisting its 47 Member States in improving the recruitment, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff. [Council of Europe, 6 November 2019](#)

**Belgium:** Belgium's Federal Ombudsman has called on prisons to stop systematic strip searches of prisoners to strike a better balance between security and dignity. [The Brussels Times, 25 November 2019](#)

**Croatia:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) stated in its judgment in the case of Dušan Ulemek that inadequate conditions in the Zagreb jail amounted to "degrading treatment". [Total Croatia News, 1 November 2019](#)

**Greece:** A group of United Nations experts on arbitrary detention said that Greece was still in violation of certain international obligations relating to how and where people are imprisoned. [The Gazette, 15 December 2019](#)

**Greece:** An internal investigation by the Citizens' Protection Ministry has revealed serious cases of corruption and mismanagement by senior officials at Greek penitentiaries. [ekathimerini.com, 23 December 2019](#)

**Ireland:** The Supreme Court has ruled a former prisoner's constitutional right to protection of his person was violated by having to 'slop out' in prison and he is entitled to €7,500 compensatory damages. [Irish Examiner, 14 November 2019](#)

**Lithuania:** The human rights of prisoners were violated during their transfer from Lukiskes Remand Prison, the latest report by the ombudsman of the Lithuanian Seimas (the legislative branch of government) concludes. [The Baltic Times, 11 November 2019](#)

## UNITED KINGDOM

**England and Wales:** A third of the prisoners at Europe's largest women's jail spend three weeks or less behind bars, watchdogs have revealed. [The Telegraph, 4 November 2019](#)

**England and Wales:** Justice officials are facing renewed calls to deal with thousands of prisoners still jailed under an abolished Kafkaesque sentencing regime that a report has branded "deeply harmful" for families. [The Guardian, 10 November 2019](#)

**England and Wales:** Half of the women in prison committed crimes to support another person's drug use, prison charities have revealed. [The Telegraph, 12 November 2019](#)

**England and Wales:** The Prime Minister is under renewed pressure to deal with the prisons crisis after it emerged that the chaotic conditions are behind a £30m-a-year bill for legal claims. [The Guardian, 28 December 2019](#)

**Northern Ireland:** The Northern Ireland Prison Service has launched a new strategy for strengthening prisoners' family relationships to support the rehabilitation process. [Irish Legal News, 6 November 2019](#)

**Northern Ireland:** A senior inspector has expressed frustration that more has not been done to improve prisoner safety in Northern Ireland. [Belfast Telegraph, 19 November 2019](#)

**Scotland:** The Scottish government has ordered a review of how deaths in prisons are handled following the deaths of four prisoners in just four days. [BBC News, 7 November 2019](#)

**Scotland:** Controversial private Scottish prisons are to be brought back into public - ownership when their contracts end. [Daily Record, 17 November 2019](#)

## OCEANIA

**Australia:** The New South Wales Government awarded a \$1.3 billion contract to run a Sydney jail to a private company despite receiving a report on riots and bribery allegations relating to the company's US operations. [ABC News, 27 November 2019](#)

**New Caledonia:** A report about the prison in New Caledonia has found that conditions are precarious, degraded and unsanitary, and violate fundamental rights. [RNZ, 19 December 2019](#)

**New Zealand:** Justice Minister Andrew Little has announced prisoners sentenced to less than three years in jail will have their voting rights restored. [RNZ, 23 November 2019](#)