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## PRISON CONDITIONS

**Criticism of Minister's budget speech:** The Saturday Star featured a response to some of the comments that the Minister of Correctional Services made during his budget speech, in particular, the fact that the country's overcrowded facilities 'was indicative of a proactive and successful NPA.' The article illustrates why South African prisons are plagued by overcrowding and why it should not be considered a barometer of successful prosecutions. Reported by Ruth Hopkins and Nooshin Erfani-Ghadimi, 8 June 2013, at <http://www.iol.co.za/saturday-star/full-prisons-not-just-due-to-effective-npa-1.1529382#.UdK73NhsRWA>

**HIV positive inmates struggle after release:** Times Live reported that members of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), in a briefing before Parliament, stated that when it came to the release of HIV-positive inmates, DCS was under no obligation to ensure that they continue to receive, and take, medication. DCS also noted that 100 babies who may have contracted HIV and whose mothers are imprisoned, were not receiving such treatment. Reported by Denise Williams, 18 June 2013, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2013/06/18/hiv-convicts-freed-to-die>

**Electronic monitoring:** The Engineering News reported that a locally patented device, Remand Revolution, is a system that uses mobile phones to track and communicate with offenders and parolees. The system comprises of an ankle bracelet tracking system and a portable alcohol monitoring device. The designing of the device was reportedly prompted by extreme overcrowding in prisons. Reported by Joanne Taylor, 21 June 2013, at <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/new-stay-at-home-system-for-low-risk-criminals-2013-06-21>

**Inquiry regarding CCTV cameras:** Business Day reported that the South African Human Rights Commission briefed the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services on 20 June 2013 on its work regarding human rights violations in prisons. Members of the Committee reportedly inquired why the living quarters of inmates could not be electronically monitored. The SAHRC was reportedly compelled to admit that it did very little work in prisons as this was largely the domain of the Judicial Inspectorate of Correctional Services. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 20 June 2013, at <http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2013/06/20/mps-ask-why-jail-cells-should-not-be-monitored>

## SENTENCING AND PAROLE

**Electronic monitoring successful:** ITWeb reported that the electronic monitoring pilot project, which was implemented by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) during February 2012, has 'already proved to be economical, effective and efficient.' According to DCS, the pilot, which entailed placing 144 life-sentenced offenders who had been released on parole on electronic monitoring, has shown a 100%

success rate, meaning all offenders complied with their parole conditions and did not re-offend. The official pilot report is only expected in September 2013, however. Reported by Marine Jacobs, 7 June 2013, at [http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=64741:Convict-monitoring-pilot-highly-successful-](http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=64741:Convict-monitoring-pilot-highly-successful-)

**Parolees ordered to return to prison:** Times Live reported that four men, sentenced to twelve years of imprisonment for murder but whose sentences were later erroneously converted into correctional supervision, were ordered to return to prison. The North Gauteng High Court stated that they had been prematurely released since they were only eligible for the conversion of their sentences when their sentence expiry date was less than five years in the future, which, in this case, would be in 2015. Reported by Times Live, 13 June 2013, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2013/06/13/dept-of-correctional-services-welcomes-waterkloof-four-court-ruling> News24 reported that the Department Correctional Services welcomed the ruling, 13 June 2013, at <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Dept-welcomes-Waterkloof-2-ruling-20130613> also reported at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306131269.html>

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## CORRUPTION AND GOVERNANCE

**Opposition party critical of Department of Correctional Services:** allAfrica.com released a press statement issued by the Democratic Alliance in which the political party notes that the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services was due to receive a briefing on 12 June 2013 from the Independent Development Trust (IDT), which is a project managing the construction of fencing around 15 correctional centres and is due to construct fencing around a further 12 centres. The report notes that neither the IDT nor the Department arrived for the meeting, which had been planned for months. The report notes further the controversy surrounding the Department's continued use of consultancy services. Reported by allAfrica.com, 12 June 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306121563.html>

**Legal problems with system management contract:** ITWeb reported that there are 'questions' surrounding the contract that the Department of Correctional Services agreed to in implementing the Remand Detainee Offender Management System. Although DCS has already spent R17 million on the project, there is reportedly 'little to show for it'. Moreover, the company contracted to make the system is reportedly suing DCS for money still owed to it for work done. Reported by Marine Jacobs, 19 June 2013, at [http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=65017:no-answers-in-offender-system-dispute](http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65017:no-answers-in-offender-system-dispute)

## REHABILITATION

**NGO assists youths in prison:** allAfrica.com featured a story on an organisation, Young in Prison (YIP), based in Cape Town, that works with young people serving sentences of imprisonment. YIP bases its work on the assumption that many youths are the victims of broken social environments. The report notes that the government is not running sufficient rehabilitative programmes, which is why organisations like YIP are performing an important function. Reported by Fergus Turner, 12 June 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306121253.html>

**Incarcerated youths offered words of support:** allAfrica.com reported that on 14 June 2013 the Minister of Correctional Services officially opened a school for offenders at the Tswelopele Correctional Centre in Kimberley. The Minister reportedly stated that juvenile offenders 'use their time in correctional centres to invest in personal development and improve their lives.' The report also noted that from 1 April 2013, education in correctional centres had become compulsory. Reported by allAfrica.com, 14 June 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306150106.html>

## OTHER

**Child detention highlighted:** eNCA News reported on an event at which both the UNHCR and Lawyers for Human Rights emphasised the often-overlooked plight of children in administrative detention centres, South Africa included. The report noted that hundreds of thousands of children fleeing war, violence, famine and poverty are affected by immigration detention and often end up at Lindela, with only a few lawyers available to come to their assistance. Reported by eNCA News, 21 June 2013, at <http://www.enca.com/south-africa/child-detention-highlighted>

**Prisoners interact with children:** IOL reported that the Department of Correctional Services hosted an 'anti-crime dialogue' between incarcerated juveniles based at correctional facilities and learners at school

in the Western Cape. The event reportedly included state dramas, youth bands and motivational speeches. Reported by Natasha Bezuidenhout, 24 June 2013, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/prisoners-steer-pupils-away-from-crime-1.1536766#.UdQJBVNSY3k>

**Department of Correctional Services assists disabled:** allAfrica.com reported that DCS donated wheelchairs to 54 people during their 'community outreach drive in the Southern Cape' during the week of 24 June 2013. Reported by allAfrica.com, 27 June 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306271494.html>

## **OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

### **EGYPT**

**Amnesty International critical of court rulings:** Amnesty International has released a blog post on its website regarding a recent court ruling wherein a one-year prison sentence was handed down against a prominent opposition activist. Amnesty has called for the conviction to be quashed and has criticized the violent oppression of freedom of expression of opposition activists in general. The post was published on 17 June 2013, at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/egypt-activist-faces-jail-sentence-bogus-charges-2013-06-17>

### **GAMBIA**

**Prisoners suffer extreme human rights abuses:** The Guardian reported that despite its reputation as a perfect vacationing destination, the Gambian penal system presents a much darker reality. The report notes the example of an activist who was sentenced to life imprisonment for distributing T-shirts at a rally. It also notes that in August 2012 nine prisoners were dragged out of their cells at random and executed by firing squad without any official reasons. Reported by Monica Mark, 16 June 2013, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/16/gambian-tourist-paradise-misery-human-rights>

### **NIGER**

**Inmate attempt prison escape:** Aljazeera reported that four inmates, all convicted of charges in connection with terrorism, attempted to escape from the civilian prison army in Niamey. The four inmates were armed and killed three prison officials during the attempt. The inmates were eventually overpowered by prison officials but 22 other inmate managed to escape during the unrest. The report noted that an investigation had been launched to determine how the inmates had obtained their weapons. Reported by Aljazeera, 2 June 2013, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/06/201361161446669173.html> also reported at Leadership, at <http://leadership.ng/news/020613/niger-prison-invasion-more-attacks-likely-west-africa-sahel>

### **NIGERIA**

**Prison overcrowding:** allAfrica.com reported that the Ogun State Attorney General, Ms Abimbola, has attributed the problem of prison overcrowding to 'lack of foresight on the part of the government.' She reportedly noted that it was extremely unlikely that the rate at which prisons were being constructed could not match the rate at which offenders were being sentenced to imprisonment. Reported by Kehinde Akinyemi, 1 June 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201305240898.html>

**Statistics on infants and juveniles released:** The Nigerian Tribune reported that the Prisons Service has 69 babies and 847 juveniles in prisons across the country as of 31 March 2013. The information was revealed in a press statement on 11 June 2013. The report notes that all infants born in prison did so as a result of their mothers' having entered prison already pregnant. Reported by the Nigerian Tribune, 12 June 2013, at <http://tribune.com.ng/news2013/en/news/item/14137-69-babies,-847-juveniles-in-nigerian-prisons.html>

**Prison transfer agreements discussed:** The Daily Times reported that at a two-day seminar organised for Heads of Nigerian Missions in Europe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs called for the early conclusion of prisoner transfer agreements between Nigeria and European countries. In terms of the agreements, Nigerians serving prison terms in Europe could be transferred home to complete their sentences. Reported by Michael Paul, 17 June 2013, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.ng/article/prisoners-nigeria-wants-conclusion-agreement-europe>

**Prisoners hanged:** The Global Post reported that the Nigerian government hanged offenders for the first

time since 2006. The four deceased had been convicted of murder or armed robbery. A human rights group reportedly stated that inmates at Benin City Prison were still traumatised by the sound of screams and thuds. Reported by Freya Petersen, 25 June 2013, at <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/130624/nigeria-hangs-four-convicted-criminals-first-known-execu>

## **SOUTH SUDAN**

**Civilians unlawfully detained:** Human Rights Watch published a post on their website regarding the South Sudanese soldiers' response to the armed violence that has occurred in the Lakes State. Soldiers have reportedly unlawfully detained and ill-treated more than 130 civilians since February 2013. Suspects are reportedly held in harsh conditions for months without charge and, at times, beaten. Reported by Human Rights Watch, 24 June 2013, at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/24/south-sudan-rough-justice-lakes-state>

## **UGANDA**

**Sentencing guidelines:** The Observer reported that official sentencing guidelines were unveiled on 10 June 2013. Following complaints about the disparities in sentencing, Chief Justice Odoki instituted a 25-member committee to look into the issue and suggest guidelines. The report noted that the new guidelines will 'strengthen delivery of justice through certainty and order.' Reported by Edward Ssekika, 19 June 2013, at [http://www.observer.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=25938:order-certainty-in-new-sentencing-guide&catid=34:news&Itemid=114](http://www.observer.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=25938:order-certainty-in-new-sentencing-guide&catid=34:news&Itemid=114)

## **ZIMBABWE**

**Diversion programmes for juveniles:** allAfrica.com reported that the Attorney-General announced that the government would be 'making provisions to channel cases involving juveniles from the formal justice system to extra-judicial programmes as a way of protecting the minors.' The announcement was reportedly made at the launch of the Zimbabwe Pre-Trial Diversion programme for juvenile offenders. The Attorney General reportedly noted that the target group of the programme would be young persons who have been arrested for offences not considered to be serious. Reported by Freeman Razemba, 3 June 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201306030363.html>

## **OTHER**

**African migrants detained in Israel:** Bloomberg Business Week reported that hundreds of African migrants are being detained at a detention centre in the desert in southern Israel. Detainees' families are reportedly only allowed to visit once a week and women and children are forced to sleep in a 'prison-like' compound. Israel is reportedly a 'magnet for asylum seekers and economic migrants and although the 'physical conditions at the Israeli detention camp appear harsh, large numbers of refugees face much worse around the region.' Reported by Diaa Hadid, 24 June 2013, at <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/2013-06-24/israeli-detention-center-for-africans-a-prison>



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