

NATIONAL CONFERENCE: LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN GEORGIA

RECOMMENDATIONS of the conference participants¹

17 June 2011

The conference participants make the following recommendations that the state bodies of Georgia implement the following measures at their earliest opportunity:

1. Amend the criminal laws to reduce the number of life/long-term applicable crimes, and review judicial practice with regard to applying life and long-term sentences, with the view of ensuring that this ultimate and maximum sentence is only applied in extreme circumstances, and thereby reduces the number of life and long-term sentenced prisoners.
2. Uphold the right of persons convicted of life imprisonment to attend their own trial when their cases are reviewed by the appellate and cassation courts.
3. Ensure full access to the judicial system for prisoners serving a life sentence.
4. Ensure all life sentenced prisoners have at least 4m² of space in their living accommodation as required under international European standards.
5. Increase the daily amount of time that life prisoners are able to access suitable exercise in the open air.
6. Ensure that all necessary medical and psychiatric facilities are available to life sentenced prisoners, and in particular improve access for life sentenced prisoners to specialised hospitals.
7. Ensure that those serving a life sentence are able to effectively access psychiatric treatment and have regular access to psychologists and social workers. Given the high number of life sentenced prisoners, there should be a sufficient number of psychologists available in the prison system. A psychiatric commission should be established and operational in order to make appropriate decisions about the need for specialised treatment of mentally disturbed prisoners.
8. Ensure that those serving a life sentence are able to effectively access sufficiently paid employment of a useful nature to keep prisoners actively employed for a normal working day.

¹ Approximately 35 participants attended the conference, including government officials, non-governmental organisations, prison officials, academics, and representatives of inter-governmental bodies (the EU, OSCE and the ICRC).

9. Ensure that life sentence prisoners are able to effectively access education programmes, including vocational training courses.
10. Create conditions for life sentence prisoners to effectively engage in physical and sporting activities as a way of maintaining health and to keep prisoners actively engaged.
12. Ensure special and gender-specific needs of women lifers are provided for.
13. Uphold the concept of progressive imprisonment for lifers (to move from high security to low security facilities) based on characteristics of the prisoner, behaviour, length of sentence served etc.
14. Adopt legislation to specifically regulate the conditions and management of life prisoners.

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