



Promoting penal
reform worldwide

Kampala, 2 April 2012

Statement of Penal Reform International
**Third Committee of the 126th Assembly of the Inter-
Parliamentary Union, Kampala/ Uganda**

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates of the Third Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights,

I would like to take this opportunity to raise the issue of access to health as a basic right for women and girls in prison.

Women and girls comprise the minority of prisoners around the world, constituting an estimated 2-9 percent of the prison population.

This means that prison infrastructure and personnel are oriented towards a male prison population, often overlooking the specific needs of women and girls as regards their gender requirements.

Women and girls in detention have a heightened vulnerability with regards to certain health needs, which are more often not adequately met by the prison service.

This includes:

- Women who have been sexually or physically abused either prior to being detained, or being a victim of such abuse following detention due to a lack of adequate protection and oversight mechanisms in the prison system;
- The increased risk to women and girls of infection, such as TB, HIV and other blood bourn diseases;
- Health issues linked to their reproductive care, including women who are detained when they are pregnant or have new babies.

Honourable Chair,

I would like to raise the Committee's attention to the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders – known as the Bangkok Rules.

The Bangkok Rules were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2010.

The Bangkok Rules set out various standards with regards to the specific needs of women and girls in the criminal justice system, including setting out standards that a state must fulfil with regards to their specific health needs.

Honourable Chair,

I would like to take this opportunity to respectfully call upon the members of the Inter Parliamentary Union to adopt the standards set out in the Bangkok Rules into their national legislation and to encourage national policy to prioritise their implementation into practice.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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