

PRI e-newsletter August 2015

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# E-newsletter

**August 2015**

**Welcome to Penal Reform International's monthly e-newsletter, a round-up of PRI and other penal reform news from around the world and a variety of criminal justice and human rights resources.**

*The views expressed in the news items below are not necessarily those of PRI.*

## In this month's edition

- [In the spotlight](#): victims and criminal justice reform; legal education
- [Global advocacy](#)
- [Drug policies](#)
- [Alternatives to imprisonment](#)
- [Justice for children](#)
- [Women in the criminal justice system](#)
- [Death penalty and life imprisonment](#)

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### New expert blogs this month ...

**In California's experience, it isn't bigger prisons that crime victims want**

In this expert blog for PRI, Lenore Anderson, Executive Director of Californians for Safety and Justice, explains how crime survivors are uniting in California both to improve

**CALIFORNIA CRIME VICTIMS'****VOICES**

*Findings from the First-Ever Survey of California Crime Victims and Survivors*



provision of trauma recovery services for victims and to advocate for justice reform.



## Using popular culture to address legal rights education in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leonean organisation

– **AdvocAid** – is using popular media, from police dramas to music, to educate women about their legal rights and improve their chances of a fair hearing. Its Director, Simitie Laval, has written a blog about their work for PRI.

## GLOBAL ADVOCACY

### UN report, 'Human rights implications of over-incarceration and overcrowding'

PRI welcomes the [report](#) of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (tabled for the 30th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council), which analyses how human rights are impacted by over-incarceration and prison overcrowding. The report recommends a proactive and holistic approach to address the problem, such as ensuring the use of pretrial detention as a last resort, increasing non-custodial measures, and proportionate sentencing. [See submissions made to the OHCHR](#) by States, UN agencies, National Human Rights Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations.

### PRI at the UN Human Rights Council

PRI will be focusing on two key issues at the forthcoming [30th session of the UN Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva (14 September - 2 October): violence against children in detention and the impact of drug policies on human rights.

- On 16 September, we are co-hosting a side-event with the Permanent Representation of Norway and Defence for Children International on violence against children. Panelists include the Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Méndez and Special Representative on Violence against Women, Marta Santos Pais. [Download the flyer](#). PRI will present its new report 'Voice of the Child' at the event.
- PRI is making an oral statement to the panel on the impact of world drug problem on human rights on 28 September.

**Call for submissions on anti-corruption measures:** The UN Office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights is requesting best practices on anti-corruption measures with the realisation and protection of human rights. Deadline 30 November.

[More information.](#)

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## DRUG POLICIES

### PRI joins the International Drug Policy Consortium

PRI is delighted to have become a member of the [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) (IDPC). The Consortium is a global network of 134 Non-Governmental Organisations that focus on issues related to drug policies (trafficking, production and use).

### Invitation to informal NGO consultation meeting on UNGASS in Geneva

Together with the International Drug Policy Consortium and the UN Quakers Office, PRI is inviting interested civil society organisations to an informal NGO consultation meeting on the forthcoming UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs. The meeting will take place on 29 September at the Quaker UN Office in Geneva. [See further information and how to RSVP.](#)

### New e-tool from the IDPC: Comparing models of drug decriminalisation

21 countries and jurisdictions are [reported to have decriminalised drug use or possession of drugs for personal use](#). However, the models of decriminalisation implemented all over the world vary widely. This e-tool aims to map out how these models work in practice, describing their legal framework, the role of the police (if any), the judicial or administrative process, the applicable sanction (if any), and examples of countries illustrating each model. The e-tool enables you to compare the various models of decriminalisation.

### Other news and resources

**Global:** [Separating fact from fiction in the cannabis debate](#)

**Brazil:** [Brazil drug case could decriminalise possession for personal use](#)

**USA:** [America's irrational drug policies](#)

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## ALTERNATIVES TO IMPRISONMENT



### **Investing in decongesting: building community service staff capacity in Uganda**

The Uganda Community Service Department, in partnership with PRI and supported by a grant from UKAID, is currently working on a programme to boost and improve the use of community service orders for minor offenders. In this blog, the project coordinator, PRI's Omar Phoenix Khan, reports from a capacity building session for policy, probation and court staff, in Jinja, Eastern Uganda.

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## **JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN**

### **Update: Children's Rights Behind Bars project led by Defence for Children International**

DCI and child rights organisations from 16 European countries are currently working on a European Union funded project to harmonise the monitoring and assessment of institutions where children are deprived of their liberty across European states. The project will produce a number of [useful materials](#), including a practical guide for professionals involved in monitoring children's facilities, particularly juvenile detention facilities, due to be published in February. The project has an expert advisory panel which includes PRI's Director of Programme Development, Nikhil Roy.

[Find out more about the project](#)

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## WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



### **Prison monitors from 13 countries attend summer school on the UN Bangkok Rules**

The week-long immersion course on the UN Bangkok Rules was held at the University of Bristol, led by expert trainers, and designed to equip students to use the Rules in the regular monitoring of women's detention facilities.

### **PRI to work with the Kenya Probation Service to pilot gender-sensitive approach to community service**

PRI is delighted to have received a grant from the [Thailand Institute of Justice \(TIJ\)](#) to work with the Kenya Probation and After Care Service to study and develop gender-sensitive community and probation orders in Kenya. The small-scale study will research current practices and experiences, and use the research findings to develop gender-sensitive offender assessment tools, guidelines and training materials. [Find out more.](#)

### **Kenya's probation officers become champions for the needs of women offenders**

In April, 18 staff from the Kenyan Probation and After Care Service and two senior officials from the Prison Department took part in a three-day PRI training on women offenders and the [UN Bangkok Rules in Nakuru, Kenya](#). Our post-training evaluation shows that participants have started to influence policy and practice towards women offenders in their local probation departments.

### **Prison Reform Trust (UK) briefing: Why focus on women's imprisonment?**

The UK-based Prison Reform Trust has produced a new short briefing on why the UK should address the problems of women's imprisonment. It contains a useful section on the common differences between men and women prisoners. The briefing comes at the start of a new three-year UK-wide programme run by PRT in the UK, [Transforming lives: Reducing women's imprisonment](#).

## Other news and resources

**Global:** [Portraits from prison tell stories of women in the drug war](#)

**Prison Reform Trust UK:** are [advertising for positions](#) to work on their new programme to reduce women's imprisonment in the UK.

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## DEATH PENALTY AND LIFE IMPRISONMENT

### **PRI's new report on the death penalty and Sharia law to be launched at the UK parliament on Monday 14 September**

In many MENA and Asian countries the perceived role of Sharia law in shaping national approaches to the death penalty is a significant one. The relationship between Sharia law and the death penalty is complex and contested. PRI's new report - [Sharia law and the death penalty - Would abolition of the death penalty be unfaithful to the message of Islam?](#) - is designed for non-experts who want to understand more about Sharia law and Islamic jurisprudence as it relates to the death penalty.

It will be presented by the author, Cambridge University scholar, Michael Mumisa, at a meeting of the **UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Abolition of the Death Penalty** – Committee Room 2a, House of Lords at 6pm on Monday 14 September.

## News and resources

### **India: Law Commission recommends country moves towards abolition of the death penalty**

This week, the Law Commission of India recommended that India abolish the death penalty apart from in terrorism cases. The [Wall Street Journal](#) gives a useful summary of its reasoning, which includes: evidence against the role of the death penalty as a deterrent; concern over arbitrary sentencing; the high risk of wrongful conviction in India's overstretched justice system; harsh death row conditions amounting to 'near torture'; and that India is behind the rest of the world in continuing to carry out the death penalty.

[Read PRI's short briefing on terrorism, the death penalty and international law.](#)

Other coverage of and opinion on the issue:

[Law panel split on eliminating death penalty](#) (The Times of India)

[The case against death penalty](#) (The Hindu)

[Law Commission urges swift end to death penalty except in terror cases](#) (India West)

[Caveat stunts death penalty punishment's progressive nature](#) (Hindustan Times)

#### **In other news:**

**Canada:** [Harper resurrects 'Life Means Life' promise on prison sentences](#)

**Kurdistan:** [Kurdistan hangs three offenders, breaking death penalty moratorium](#)

**UK:** [Britain's £13m overseas war on drugs 'could be helping fund executions'](#)

**USA:** [Connecticut's highest court overturns its death penalty](#)

**USA:** [20 inmates show the heartbreaking cost of growing old behind bars](#)

**USA:** [Largest Dutch pension fund exits Mylan over death penalty concerns](#)

**Vatican:** [Criminal justice reformers await holy ally: Pope Francis](#)

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## **OTHER NEWS**

### **Conditions and treatment in detention**

**Burma's** [draft prison law is too vague to protect inmates](#)

**Morocco:** [Shocking pictures show life inside notorious Polisario prisons](#)

**Finland:** [Council of Europe anti-torture Committee publishes report on Finland](#)

**USA:** [Solitary confinement: punished for life](#)

**Brazil:** [Special Rapporteur on Torture visits Brazil](#)

**Latin America:** [Corrupt, violent and overcrowded: inside Latin America's prisons](#)

### **Work, rehabilitation and reintegration**

**USA:** [Modern-Day Slavery in America's Prison Workforce](#)

**Namibia:** [Inmates acquire crucial skills at prison workshop](#)

**UK:** [Telling the bees](#)

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