

PRI's Bangkok Rules E-bulletin: December 2013

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Bangkok Rules E-Bulletin

Women in the Criminal Justice System

December 2013



Toolbox on the UN Bangkok Rules

Welcome to Penal Reform International's quarterly Bangkok Rules E-Bulletin, a round-up of news and developments from PRI and others around the world on women in detention, and the implementation of the UN Bangkok Rules. The views expressed in the news items are not necessarily those of PRI.

We welcome contributions to the e-bulletin and do let us know what you think by emailing publications@penalreform.org

What's in this issue?

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WHAT ARE THE BANGKOK RULES?

The Bangkok Rules are a set of standards adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2010, which supplement existing standards for the treatment of prisoners by addressing the specific needs of women in the criminal justice system for the first time. For more information on the Rules see PRI's [short guide](#) on the Rules.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

[Guest blog: Addressing the histories of sexual abuse for women in prison](#)

Increasing female imprisonment rates has in many countries shone a spotlight on the conditions and policies affecting women in conflict with the law. Australia is no different. In this blog, Mary Stathopoulos from the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault looks at approaches to address women prisoners' histories of sexual abuse.

[Read the blog here.](#)

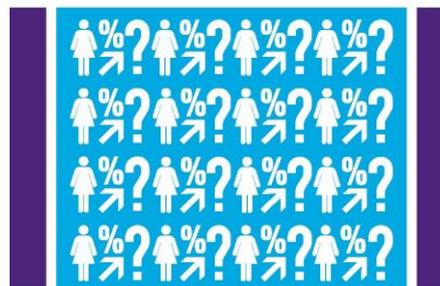
NEW FROM PRI

[Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Armenia and Georgia](#)

PRI has published the first in a series of reports examining the profile and backgrounds of women offenders. As part of the research, PRI surveyed 65 and 70 per cent of the female prison populations in Georgia and Armenia respectively, analysed statistics received from authorities and interviewed key stakeholders.

The report was launched at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw on 25 September and is available in [English](#) and [Russian](#). Similar research has also been carried out in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; report to follow.

Who are women prisoners?
Survey results from Armenia
and Georgia

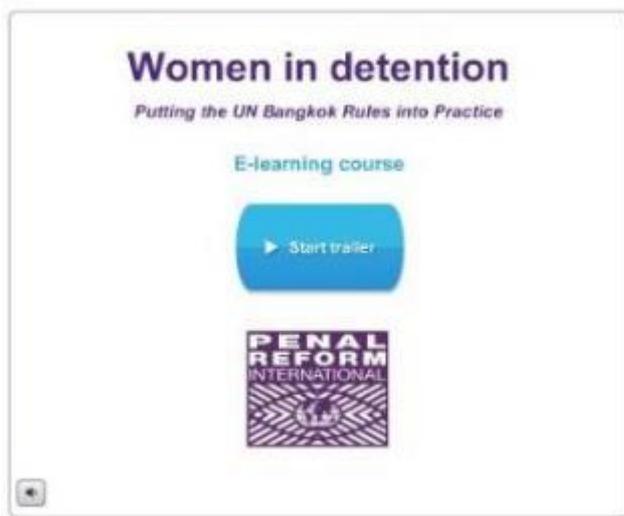


Towards a gender-sensitive penal policy

[Toolbox on the UN Bangkok Rules: Free online course, Guidance Document and Index of Implementation](#)

In October, PRI launched its [Toolbox for the Implementation of the UN Bangkok Rules](#) at the UN General Assembly in New York. Two flagship resources were presented: [a Guidance Document and Index of Implementation](#) and a self-directed e-course, [Women in Detention: Putting the UN Bangkok Rules into Practice](#), with Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand delivering the keynote address.

Watch our new short introductory [video](#) on the e-course by clicking on the image below. The English version of the e-course is now open for registrations at <http://penalreform-elearning.org>. Arabic, Russian and other languages to follow in 2014.



LOOKING AHEAD

Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

PRI is preparing to launch the second report in the women in prison series, looking at the profile and backgrounds of women offenders in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Preliminary findings from the research show that:

- Only 38 per cent of women surveyed in Kyrgyzstan were in employment prior to imprisonment, compared to 57 per cent in Kazakhstan
- 50 per cent of the women surveyed in Kazakhstan said they experienced depression in prison, but only 3 per cent received psychological treatment
- Other than the psychological impact, the most common consequences of imprisonment for the women surveyed were loss of employment and accommodation, family breakdown and being stigmatised by their family/community

The full report will be available in English and Russian in early 2014.

In December PRI will continue its research project on women prisoners in Jordan.

Imprisoned far from home: the impact of social isolation on women prisoners

PRI Associate and researcher, Frances Sheahan writes about the impact of social isolation

on women prisoners in Kazakhstan. Kukson women's prison is located an hour and a half from the nearest city of Karaganda.

For a unique glimpse into life in Kyrgyzstan's prisons, French photographer Eric Gourlan voluntarily spent a month behind bars, including one week in a women's prison. An [exhibition of the photos](#) that he captured during this time opened in Bishkek in October.

LOOKING BACK

[PRI visits Atyrau women's prison](#)

In November, representatives from PRI's Central Asia Office conducted a mission visit to Atyrau as part of a project to strengthen health and social services in women and children's prisons in Kazakhstan. They found the prison building to be reasonably new with good sanitary conditions. There are three psychologists working on site who also partially function as social workers. 91 per cent of the women are of working age and 30 per cent are currently employed – either as cooks and cleaners or in sewing workshops. Secondary education and training in hairdressing, tailoring and baking are available but access to literature is poor. It was advised that books be purchased for the library, that library computers be provided with limited internet access and that computer literacy courses be made available.

[PRI at the annual ICRC seminar on health care](#)

In October, PRI's Programme Officer, Olivia Rope, attended the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) annual seminar on health care, which this year focused on older prisoners and women. She presented on the UN Bangkok Rules and the specific health care needs of women in detention.

[PRI's statement at the OSCE's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting](#)

In September, PRI submitted a statement to the OSCE's 2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting highlighting the links between discrimination of women in the criminal justice system and violence against women. It outlines how a large percentage of women prisoners have been victims of violence prior to imprisonment, and how women also have a heightened vulnerability to abuse during arrest, questioning and in prison. PRI calls on OSCE member states to review their penal legislation, policies and practices in line with the UN Bangkok Rules.

[PRI blog: The stories behind women in prison](#)

PRI's Programme Officer Olivia Rope reflects on discussions at the OSCE's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in September and [PRI's side-event](#) where the new report [Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Armenia and Georgia](#) was

launched.

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

[Report from UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women](#)

In October, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Professor Rashida Manjoo presented a new report, *Pathways to, conditions and consequences of incarceration for women*, illustrating the strong link between violence against women and women's imprisonment - prior, during and after prison. The report notes that the Bangkok Rules established for the first time standards that provide specifically for women offenders, offering comprehensive guidance for the gender-sensitive treatment of women prisoners and offenders.

[Call for Member for the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against Women in law and in practice, \(Latin American and Caribbean Group\)](#)

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council has called for applications for a Member from the Latin American and Caribbean Group for the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice. The deadline is 6 January 2014 and more details on the application procedure can be found at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/HRC25.aspx>

[LICADHO publishes report, 'Children behind bars: Growing up in a Cambodian prison'](#)

Issued in October this report by the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) is the first in a series of case studies assessing the impact on children of growing up in Cambodian prisons. The series aims to provide a greater, in-depth understanding of the physical and psychological consequences for children who have lived with their mother in prison.

It states '*Children in Cambodian prisons are often forgotten by society. Worse still, they are too often ignored by the authorities responsible for them.*'

[Ireland: Redesigning the Pattern: Women and the Criminal Justice System](#)

The Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) held a seminar in Dublin on 4 December focusing on community responses to offending by women. A new IPRT paper, [Women and the Criminal Justice System: Towards a Non-Custodial Approach](#), was launched at the event.

[Is criminal justice a form of violence against women?](#)

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, as part of their [Justice Matters](#) project, are opening the debate on whether criminal justice is a form of violence against women and how organisations working in the field can collaborate to mitigate the worst effects of these harms. They are ultimately seeking to downsize the criminal justice systems in the UK,

explore alternatives and develop an evidenced agenda to reduce reliance on the criminal justice system.

UNODC Handbook on strategies to reduce overcrowding in prisons

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime have published their Handbook on strategies to reduce overcrowding in prisons. It includes a section on women and non-custodial alternatives as outlined by the Bangkok Rules.

UNODC's report on the situation of women in the criminal justice system in Vietnam

Launched in November, this is the first report of its kind and identifies key challenges and gaps to be addressed across the criminal justice system. Drawing on expertise from UNODC, UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the report covers various issues faced by women in Vietnam including as prisoners, offenders and defendants.

A Lifetime of Punishment: The impact of the felony drug ban on welfare benefits

A new report by the Sentencing Project finds that an estimated 180,000 women in 12 states in the US are subjected to a lifetime ban on welfare benefits following drug convictions. It explores the impact of this policy on these women and their children.

Prison Visits and Families: Impacts, Successes and Struggles

Eurochips has launched the second in a series of four research-based newsletters addressing issues faced by children of prisoners. The following issues will be launched over the coming weeks and will be available on the [Eurochips website](#) under 'Autumn 2013 Special Edition Newsletters'.

Children of Prisoners: Interventions and mitigations to strengthen mental health

The final report from the three-year EU-funded COPING project was [published in October](#). The study suggests that children with a parent in prison may be up to two and a half times more likely than other children to experience mental health problems, stigma and other social disadvantages. The end of the project was also marked by a conference in Brussels on 6 November: [Coping with a Parent in Prison: An Agenda for Policy Reform](#).

Joint communication to the UN Commission on the Status of Women on the Human Rights Violations of Migrant Women in Spain: Detention in foreign detention centres (Centro de Internamiento, CIEs)

Pro Igual and Ferrocarril Clandestino presented a joint communication to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, highlighting the singling out of migrant women through ethnic profiling and disproportionate use of deprivation of liberty. The communication outlines the range of human rights abuses suffered by migrant women in CIEs and proposes measures for Spanish authorities to remedy the situation.

New tool kit from INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence

Law Enforcement Violence against Women of Color and Trans People of Color: A Critical Intersection of Gender Violence and State Violence is a new resource and tool kit to help raise awareness around and challenge law enforcement violence in the US.

OTHER NEWS

Brazil: [Sul-africanas já lideram casos de estrangeiras presas em SP](#): Women from South Africa comprise the largest foreign group in prisons of São Paulo outnumbering Bolivians and Angolans. Among foreign men in prison, Nigerians comprise the majority.

Scotland: [Female offender projects awarded £3m by Scottish government](#)

Northern Ireland: [Women strip-searched too often in prison system](#)

Canada: [Prison watchdog raises concerns about inmate self-injury](#)

Cambodia: [Case study highlights impact of prison life on children](#)

Costa Rica: [Women to serve reduced drug sentences](#)

Japan: [Japan's ageing, female prisoners?](#)

Scotland: [Scotland's jails 'defy reforms urged by Angiolini'](#)

UK: [Women sharing prison vans with men 'exposed to abuse'](#)

Ireland: [Women's prisons over capacity as inmates committed for minor offences, warns Irish Penal Reform Trust](#)

Georgia: [Hepatitis C infested prison closed due to bad climate](#)

UK: [New book by Vicky Price 'Prisonomics: Behind Bars in Britain's Failing Prisons'](#): debating the effectiveness and proportionality of imprisoning women for relatively minor, non-violent offences.

UK: [Female prisoners to serve sentences 'nearer families'](#)

UK: [Two women's prisons to close](#)

Do you have new publications or resources to share on women and criminal justice?

We hope that our newsletter is used to share information and resources among a growing network of individuals and organisations interested in the issue of women and detention, and would like to encourage colleagues to send us materials, feedback, news items, information about events etc to include it in our bulletins. We are also always interested in your feedback on our publications, projects and the bulletin itself. We hope to hear from you! Send your contributions to info@penalreform.org.

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