



E-newsletter

October 2014



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.

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

[PRI at the United Nations General Assembly](#)

PRI co-hosted two side-events at the [69th session of the UN General Assembly in New York](#). The first, [Corruption and its impact on human rights](#), was co-hosted with [Transparency International](#) and the Permanent Representation of Morocco to the UN. A panel of experts, including Andrea Huber, PRI's Policy Director, highlighted the areas where these issues interlink and called for the relevant UN bodies to address corruption through a human rights lens. [See more at this blog](#) on the links between corruption and criminal justice systems.



PRI's other side-event, [Women in custody – gender equality challenges and opportunities in crisis and conflict situations](#), was hosted with the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the UN and the United Nations (Global Focal Point On Police, Justice and Corrections). The event broadened the discourse on gender-specific issues facing women in detention by focusing on the often extreme examples of this problem in crisis and conflict situations. A panel of experts gave an overview of these issues and canvassed ideas for greater protection of women in detention at policy and operational levels, gender-sensitive peacekeeping operations, and the post-2015 development agenda. Watch the video [here](#).



Rashida Manjoo, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, spoke about the gender-specific pathways to incarceration for women

PRI promoting penal reform at the Crime Congress 2015

To mark PRI's 25th Anniversary and prepare for the [Crime Congress in Qatar in April 2015](#), we're running a series of monthly expert guest blogs, addressing interesting current trends and pressing criminal justice challenges in criminal justice and penal reform. New blogs in the series include:

[No escape from violence: childhood abuse, offending and women in prison](#)

In the latest entry in the 25th anniversary series, Dr Lillian Artz, Director of the [Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit at the University of Cape Town](#), explores some of the findings of a 2012 study on women in detention, [Hard Times: Women's Pathways to Crime and Incarceration](#). The author focuses on physical and sexual abuse in the lives of women offenders as a probable catalyst for violent offences and calls for greater international attention on this relatively unknown issue.

[Old age behind bars: how can prisons adapt to the needs of increasingly elderly populations?](#)

In the September entry in the anniversary series, Bridget Sleaf, Senior Rights Policy Adviser at [HelpAge International](#), highlights the age-specific problems facing elderly prisoners. The author promotes the aging prison population as an especially vulnerable group in the wider discourse concerning the protection of human rights of older people. Read the full blog [here](#) or listen to the [podcast](#).

Catch up on all of PRI's expert blogs [here](#).

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ADVOCACY

[International Conference on Criminal Justice Reform and Human Rights](#)

From November 3-4, PRI is hosting a conference in Amman, Jordan, with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Jordanian Departments for Public Security Department and Correctional and Rehabilitation.

The conference aims to generate a platform for in-depth discussion between international experts, decision and policy-makers on the international and regional standards on administration of justice and human rights which have been developed during the past 10 years, as well as highlighting the best practices that have been adopted at the local level to comply with these trends. The conference includes specialised sessions and workshops to discuss the rights of vulnerable groups and their treatment within the criminal justice system including women, children and people with disabilities.

Read more about the opening statements [here](#) and follow the conference on Twitter via [#CJRHR](#) or [@PenalReformInt](#).

[PRI submission on Kazakhstan to the UN Convention against Torture](#)

This written submission was made to the 53rd session of the UN Convention against Torture with regard to its examination of Kazakhstan's 3rd period report under Article 19 of the Convention. In this submission, PRI makes observations on Kazakhstan's recently adopted new Criminal Code, which defines and penalises torture as a distinct offence. The submission also highlights conditions of detention amounting to torture and ill-treatment and examines the newly established National Preventive Mechanism while making recommendations for further development.

[New guidance from UN Committee on the right to liberty and security of person](#)

The [UN Human Rights Committee](#) have issued a new General Comment (No. 35) which clarifies limits on detention. As explained in [the Committees' press release](#):

'The new General Comment concerns Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which covers liberty and security of person. It codifies the Committee's work over the past three decades on this issue to give government officials, legal practitioners, human rights monitors and civil society a full understanding of the Committee's views. The General Comment covers a wide range of issues under Article 9, including the definition of arbitrary detention and the procedural safeguards necessary for avoiding unlawful and arbitrary detention, such as the 48-hour standard for promptly bringing a criminal suspect before a judge.'

The Committee is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) by its State parties. [Download the General Comment.](#)

[25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#)

November 20 marks [the 25th anniversary of the UN CRC](#), the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. The University of Leiden will be marking this event with a [conference from November 17-19](#) that will reflect on the future of children's rights implementation.

Nikhil Roy, PRI's Programme Development Director, will give a presentation on the adverse effects of solitary confinement on children in detention and will advocate for alternative disciplinary sanctions.

PRI will also host a side-event with [Defence for Children Netherlands \(DCI-Netherlands\)](#) and the [European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CPT\)](#). Read more about the side-event [here](#) and email info@defenceforchildren.nl to register your attendance.

[Special panel highlights the need for a Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty](#)

On October 14 in New York, Defence for Children International (DCI) [hosted a special panel and reception](#) on Children Deprived of Liberty: The Call for a Global Study.

A request for the Global Study to be carried out has been included in the draft text of the resolution on the rights of the child for the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly. Over 60 NGOs supporting the Call have issued a [Joint Statement](#) calling for the appointment of an independent expert to carry out the Study as a condition in the text of the resolution.

[Read more about the Call](#) and PRI's involvement as a member of the core NGO group.

[Uganda still needs stronger child protection mechanisms](#)

In this new blog, Denis Angeri from the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative Uganda calls for greater protection of children in conflict with the law in Uganda, drawing special attention to the plight of [Uganda's street children](#), a group that is often comes into contact with the law but is particularly vulnerable to violence and physical and sexual abuse.

Other news and resources:

- Cambodia: [Teenage prisoners' future](#)
- China: [Prison no bar to young offenders' catwalk dreams](#)
- Scotland: [Innocent victims: Life for children with mothers behind bars](#)
- Scotland: [Troubling questions raised by youth custody](#)
- UK: [NGOs unite against 'secure college' plan](#)

- USA: [Confinement for teens on Rikers Island is 'torture'](#)

WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

[Research in Uganda on Women Prisoners](#)

PRI is supporting our local NGO partner, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) in conducting research into the needs and characteristics of women prisoners in Uganda. Over 100 women prisoners have been interviewed so far with initial findings showing that many are imprisoned far away from their homes and children, receiving little or no visitors. Many have experienced sexual or violent abuse, and this is linked to the prevalence of convictions for manslaughter.



Once the research is completed, PRI and FHRI will discuss the findings with government officials and other stakeholders to identify priority areas where women offenders will benefit most from changes to law, policy and practice, and provide training and expertise for these changes to take place. The research follows the same methodology as we have used in our South Caucasus, MENA and Central Asia regions and will provide a valuable addition to the research reports and data gathered to date.

Read more about this research [here](#).

[Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Jordan and Tunisia](#)

PRI's third report in its [research series on women in detention](#) is now available in [Arabic](#). The report presents the results of a survey of the female prison populations in Jordan and Tunisia carried out in December 2013 and February 2014.

Other news and resources:

- China: [Women bear the brunt of abuse in China's 'black jails'](#)
 - UK: [Women in prison will get help to maintain family links](#)
 - USA: [The pernicious 'war on drugs' is behind America's staggeringly high female prison population](#)
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CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

[How peer educators are improving health and conditions in Irish prisons](#)

In this blog, Alison Hannah, Executive Director at PRI, commends a programme in Irish prisons to improve health and conditions by training prisoner volunteers. The Irish Red Cross has been implementing this programme since 2009 and recently presented its results to an international audience at the WHO Health in Prison conference in Portlaoise in early October.

Other news and resources:

- Cambodia: [Officials probe Pailin prison](#)
 - Georgia: [Despite prison reforms, abuses still common](#)
 - Russia: [Russia to launch Europe's largest prison](#)
 - South Africa: [Combating the global epidemic of prison overcrowding](#)
 - UK: [Inmate suicide figures expose human toll of prison crisis](#)
 - UK: New [Bromley Briefings](#) Prison Factfile by the Prison Reform Trust for Autumn 2014. The report particularly highlights the plight of [the elderly, sick, and disabled behind bars](#).
 - USA: [Solitary confinement is cruel and all too unusual. Why is it only getting worse?](#)
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DEATH PENALTY AND ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS

[PRI welcomes the winners of our international investigative journalism competition](#)

PRI was delighted to welcome to London the winners of its inaugural competition for the best journalism investigating the death penalty and life (or long-term) imprisonment. In October, following review by panels of judges, the three winners travelled to London to visit the offices of The Guardian newspaper and meet PRI staff and other prison reformers. The successful entrants were:

- Adaria Gushtyn, from Belarus, who won the Russian language prize for her articles detailing the cases and backgrounds of men facing the death penalty in Belarus. Read Adaria's articles [here](#).
- Omar Maharmeh, from Jordan, who won the Arabic language prize for his article about a prisoner's experience of waiting for execution. Read Omar's article [here](#).
- Nancy Mullane, from the USA, who won the English language prize for her radio broadcasts of life on death row and the role of prisoners acting as 'jailhouse lawyers' for their fellow inmates. Listen to Nancy's broadcasts [here](#).

The competition and prize form part of [PRI's two-year project 'Progressive abolition of the death penalty and implementation of humane alternative sanctions after a moratorium or abolition'](#), which is funded by the European Union.

[The pain inflicted by the death penalty is wider than many think](#)

In this blog, Oliver Robertson, Project Manager at PRI for the Death Penalty and Alternatives, comments on the theme of this year's World Day Against the Death Penalty, [mental health](#), drawing special attention to the mental health of other people connected to the individual who faces execution such as [children of parents sentenced to death](#), [lawyers](#) and [prison guards](#).

Other news and resources:

[Fundraiser and launch party for new film, 'The Penalty'](#)

A new film, 'The Penalty' will be launched this week at a fundraising event. The film will illustrate the far-reaching effects of capital punishment on many different groups, including the families of those persons sentenced to death as well as victims' families and prison officials. The directors will be available for questions and there will be talks from the executive producer and [Maya Foa, Strategic Director of the Death Penalty Team at Reprieve](#).

The launch will be at [The Driver](#) (near King's Cross) from 6.30pm on Thursday November 6. No need to RSVP.

Follow the project on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

[Fundraising for justice for Malawians sentenced to death](#)

Almost 200 Malawians are sentenced to death under the colonial-era mandatory death penalty law. These people are now getting a second chance at a fair hearing after

Malawi abolished the mandatory death penalty in 2007. A new project aims to ensure that the new hearings comply with international standards and to assist Malawian stakeholders to develop a criminal justice system that is capable of delivering fair and just sentences in cases where the death penalty is an option.

Read more about this inspiring project and show your support [here](#).

- China: [China considers ending the death penalty for nine crimes](#)
- China: [China executed 2,400 people last year... that's a drop of 20 per cent on 2012](#)
- Ghana: [More Ghanaians opposed to the death penalty](#)
- Iraq: [Death penalty fuels violence in Iraq says UN report](#)
- Pakistan: [UK 'aid for executions' in spotlight as Pakistan set to restart hangings](#)
- USA: [Supreme Court late night rulings on death row fates](#)
- USA: [Solitary confinement for death row inmates gets federal review](#)
- Taiwan: [Justice minister voices support for the death penalty to be repealed](#)
- The Vatican: [Pope Francis blasts life sentences as 'hidden death penalty'](#)

ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON

[Excellence in Training on Rehabilitation in Africa \(EXTRA Project\)](#)

In early October the Directors of the Probation and Community Service Departments from Kenya and Tanzania joined their Ugandan counterparts and PRI staff in Kampala to launch the EXTRA Project. PRI, with its government partners in the three countries, is piloting a new holistic approach to encouraging greater and more effective use of community service.

All three country teams were successful in sharing ideas and tactics for increasing the use of community service orders, how to ensure that they are seen through to completion, and how to improve the quality of offender rehabilitation.



One of the key points to ensuring successful community service is the creation of positive perceptions around the idea. There must be a belief among stakeholders that the order will be followed, that it is a reasonable punishment and that it will have a positive effect. In early 2015, the project will move to improving the perceptions throughout key groups such as magistrates, probation officers, community leaders, offenders themselves and other stakeholders. Over the final months of 2014, each country team will be collecting current perceptions amongst these groups in order to compare with those at the end of this two year project.

Other news and resources:

Australia: [Inmates leaving prison without monitoring, reporting requirements, ombudsman says](#)

UK: [Two companies to run more than half of privatised probation services](#)

UK: [UK Government report finds no correlation between criminalisation of drug use and drug consumption](#)

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