



E-newsletter

September 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's Global Prison Trends Reports 2015: Call for information on number of staff in prisons](#)

PRI are gathering information on staff-prisoner ratios. We would appreciate any information on the numbers of employees in your country's prisons. Please send any information you have to Olivia Rope, Programme Officer at orope@penalreform.org, and if possible indicating categories of staff (whether healthcare staff, security/wardens and or administrative).

EXPERT BLOG SERIES

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:

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

In the latest blog in PRI's 25th 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](#).

[Out of balance - disproportionality in sentencing](#)

In the August entry in the anniversary series, Dr Mary Rogan, Head of Law at Dublin Institute of Technology and Chair of the [Irish Penal Reform Trust](#), discusses recent jurisprudence on the concept of gross disproportionality and its possible role in combatting the overuse of imprisonment and penal excess. Read the full blog [here](#) or listen to the [podcast](#).

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

GLOBAL ADVOCACY

[PRI calls on Human Rights Council \(HRC\) to address prison over-crowding](#)

On 10 September, Taghreed Jaber, PRI's Regional Director in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), sat on a panel at the 27th Regular Session of the HRC. She outlined the issue of serious prison overcrowding in the Middle East and North Africa

and its impact on human rights. The overcrowding of prisons means a lack of space, staff, and resources that negatively impacts the human rights of the prisoners detained in these conditions.



The discussion called for recognition that these human rights violations are a result of policy choices. Non-custodial alternatives to imprisonment are a cheaper and more sustainable way to achieve greater offender rehabilitation. Examples from Morocco and Algeria highlight these advantages.

Read PRI's oral statement [here](#), jointly submitted with the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), the [Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales](#), and the [International Legal Foundation](#). A [summary of the discussion](#) and a [recording of the panel](#) are also available.

[PRI's Statement to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention \(WGAD\)](#)

In a statement to the WGAD on their [Draft Basic Principles and Guidelines on Remedies and Procedures on the Right of Anyone Deprived of His or Her Liberty by Arrest or Detention to Bring Proceedings Before Court](#), PRI highlighted that restrictions on the right to liberty are not only problematic in human rights terms if they are 'unlawful' but also if they are arbitrary, disproportionate and unnecessary. The statement calls for the principles and guidelines to clarify that a review of the 'lawfulness' of detention would include a substantial review based on the legality, necessity and proportionality of the deprivation of liberty. Read the full statement [here](#).

[PRI co-organising side-event at the UN General Assembly, New York: 'Women in custody - gender equality challenges and opportunities in crisis and conflict situation'](#)

Together with the Permanent Missions of Thailand and Sweden and the United Nations (the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Development Programme, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and UNWomen), PRI is hosting a side-event at the UN in New York on 23 October 2014 between 1.15 and 2.30pm in Room CR.6. The side-event will provide an overview of the pathways to incarceration and the conditions of detention for women in custody and address the incorporation of gender equality at policy and operational levels of security sector reform, gender aspects in peacekeeping operations, and the post-2015 agenda.

[PRI's statement to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#)

PRI delivered a statement to the OSCE on September 26 at the OSCE [Human Dimension Implementation Meeting](#) during its dedicated session on 'Violence against women belonging to vulnerable groups'. The statement highlights the links between violence and women offenders and prisoners and encourages OSCE member states to review their penal legislation, policies, and practices in light of the Bangkok Rules. Read the full statement [here](#) and [find out more on the PRI website](#).

Other news and resources:

- [The UN General Assembly opened its 69th annual session](#) on 16 September 2014, with the focus on formulating a post-2015 development agenda.
- [Global Commission on Drug Policy issues report](#) ahead of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in 2016, recommending five pathways to improve the global drug policy regime.

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

[PRI Central Asia conference addresses role of ombudsmen in tackling violence against children in detention](#)

In mid-September in Dushanbe, PRI met with UNICEF and local partner the [Child Rights Centre](#) to raise awareness of the issue of violence against children in closed institutions, share information on regional practice, and to explore the role of the Ombudsman in protecting the rights of children in detention.

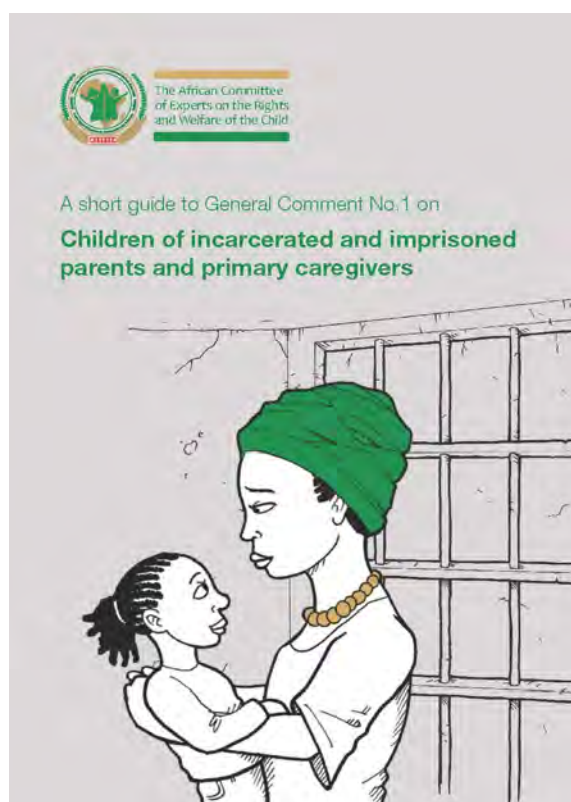
The conference was one activity in a wider [PRI programme spanning Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan](#) funded by the European Union, which aims to prevent the use of solitary confinement for children in detention and to ensure that children are kept separate from adults, and girls from boys.

[How should we treat juveniles who commit the most serious crimes? A view from India](#)

In this new blog, PRI's Programme Development Director, Nikhil Roy, provides an overview of an expert debate held in New Delhi on the Indian government's proposal to treat 16- to 18-year-olds accused of serious crimes as adults. The debate reflected the current controversy in India over the punishment of juveniles for serious offences, following the terrible gang rape of a student in New Delhi in December 2012.

[Looking ahead to the first World Congress on Juvenile Justice](#)

The first ever World Congress on Juvenile Justice will take place in Geneva in January 2015. This week-long event aims to become a milestone in the implementation of international norms relating to children in conflict with law and children who are victims, survivors or witnesses. Find out more and register for the Congress [here](#).



[Launch of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child's \(ACERWC\) first General Comment](#)

In early September, [PRI co-organised the launch of ACERWC's first General Comment](#), which addresses the protection of prisoners' children.

The [full text](#) of the General Comment can be found on the Committee's website and a [short guide](#) created in conjunction with PRI is also available. [Read more](#) about the launch or [watch a video!](#)

[PRI events in Jordan for draft Juvenile Justice Bill](#)

With [a new Juvenile Justice Act soon set to become law in Jordan](#), PRI's MENA office has been active promoting its new provisions, organising a roundtable for judges to raise awareness about the incoming legislation on juvenile justice and to discuss its implementation, and a media workshop in August to disseminate information about the new legislation and international standards and safeguards relating to legal aid and the

protection of children.

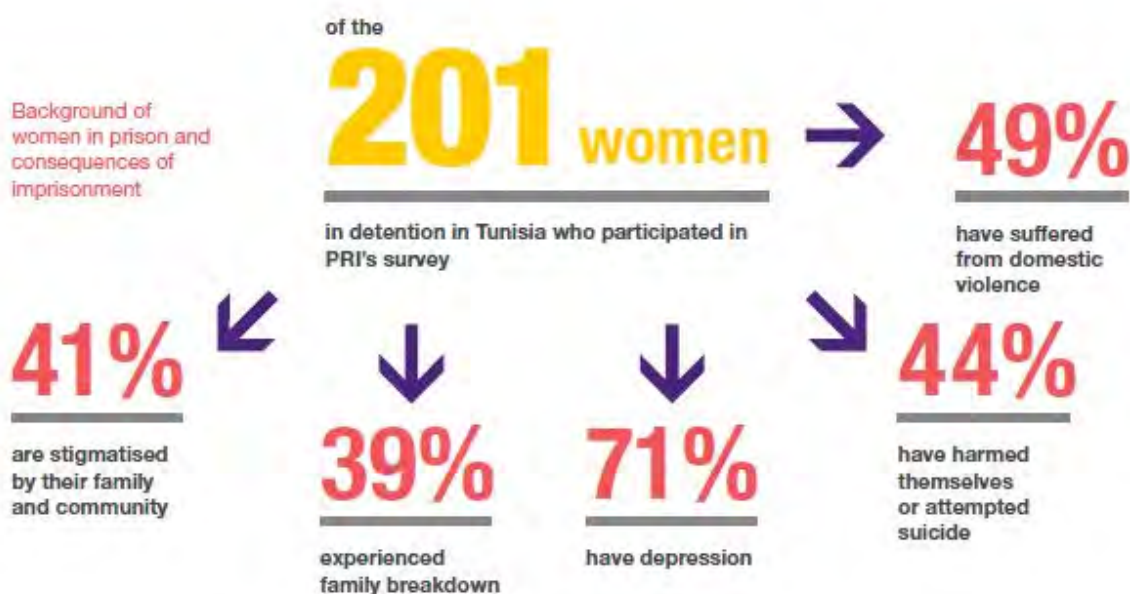
Other news and resources:

- [The age of criminal responsibility in Denmark may be lowered to 12.](#)
- [How restorative justice is steering young offenders away from crime.](#)
- [Simon Hughes calls for review into children's access to legal aid.](#)
- [Uganda still in need of stronger child protection mechanisms.](#)

WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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

The report provides results from a survey of 28 and 32 per cent of the female prisoner population in Jordan and Tunisia respectively, with a view to highlighting the need for policies that better reflect the specific needs of women prisoners. The report provides recommendations based on the Bangkok Rules. [See a snapshot of findings and the full report in English](#) (an Arabic version will be published in October).



PRI is currently supporting the [Foundation for Human Rights Initiative](#) in conducting similar research in Uganda and has shared its methodology with [Advocaid](#) for their upcoming report on women prisoners in Sierra Leone.

PRI' [report](#) on women in detention in



Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was presented to Members of Parliament, representatives of law enforcement agencies and international organisations in Astana on 25 September.

[Women in prison: Information vacuums, harms and human rights by Jo Baker](#)

PRI's [new blog post](#) is a feature by Jo Baker highlighting the lack of information available to female prisoners and the resulting harm to their ability to exercise their human rights.

This is one of a series of [posts](#) by Jo Baker on her research last year among women's prisons and prison communities in Albania, Guatemala, Jordan, the Philippines and Zambia, with [DIGNITY, the Danish Institute Against Torture](#), now published as a [report](#).



[PRI provides training on Bangkok Rules at the 'All Female United Nations Prison Officers Course' at Rwanda's Peace Academy](#)

In mid-September, PRI's Policy Director, Andrea Huber, joined a group of instructors at a pre-deployment course for UN peacekeepers. This day long course provided participants with training on the gender-specific needs of women prisoners, based on the Bangkok Rules. [Read more on the PRI website.](#)

[Arabic version of PRI's Short guide to the Bangkok Rules](#)

PRI's short illustrated guide to the Bangkok Rules is [now available in Arabic](#). The guide provides an accessible summary of the profile of women prisoners, identifying why international standards are needed and outlining who and what the Rules address.

Other news and resources:

- India: Nikhil Roy, PRI's Programme Development Director, commented on the issue of '[collateral convicts](#)', the children of female prisoners who stay in jail with their mothers.
- [Shadow report to the UN Committee against Torture](#): Various US-based organisations have issued a shadow report to the Committee on the practice of shackling incarcerated pregnant women highlighting that the practice constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment because it increases the risk of serious medical complications and is unnecessary except under the most extreme circumstances.
- Policy Brief: [Women who inject drugs and HIV: addressing specific needs](#): UNODC, UNWomen, WHO and INPUD have issued a policy brief identifying the specific problems faced by women drug-users and promoting alternatives to imprisonment, based on the Bangkok Rules.
- Research Project: [New study on the impact of maternal imprisonment on children](#).

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

[Is a prison sentence always the solution?](#)

PRI's short animated film on the damaging impact of the unnecessary use of imprisonment around the world and the need for greater use of non-custodial measures is [now available in Arabic](#).

(فهل عقوبة السجن والحبس هي الحل الحقيقي يوماً؟)

[Measures urgently needed to address widespread torture of suspects and detainees in Cambodia](#)

A [new blog post](#) for PRI by Naly Pilorge, Director of the [Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights](#) (LICADHO), calls for the Cambodian government to uphold its commitment to address torture and to establish an independent National Preventative Mechanism. The blog makes reference to a report published by LICADHO on 26 June to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Read the full report [here](#).



Other news and resources:

- Azerbaijan: [The UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture suspended their visit to Azerbaijan after being denied access to places of detention.](#)
- Azerbaijan: [Azerbaijan to extend periods of pre-trial detention and preliminary investigation.](#)
- Brazil: [The UN denounces Brazil for having the world's fourth largest prison population.](#)
- Egypt: [The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights find the Ministry of Interior's proposed amendments to penal legislation 'disappointing'.](#)
- Kyrgyzstan: [USAID launches HIV React Project to decrease HIV in Kyrgyz prisons.](#)
- Thailand: [Thai prisoners forced to work for prison racket.](#)
- USA: [The average Florida inmate only gets two visits while in prison.](#)

DEATH PENALTY AND ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS

[Social survey on public opinion in Kazakhstan on the death penalty for terrorism offences](#)

Public opinion is frequently cited as a justification for the death penalty. This survey

explores the reality of public attitudes in Kazakhstan towards the death penalty as a response to 'terrorist activities resulting in death'.

Read the full report [here](#). A [similar report on public opinion towards the death penalty in Tajikistan was carried out by Nota Bene in 2013](#).

[PRI's statement to the OSCE on its latest report on the death penalty](#)

Further to its statement at the HDIM on violence against women ([see above](#)), PRI also made a statement on 24 September that welcomed the OSCE's [latest report on the death penalty](#) and called for further recognition of the wider impact of capital punishment on individuals other than the offender, such as children and family members, judges, and prison officers. The statement also highlighted PRI's current work on the death penalty and its effect on defence lawyers and prison staff.

Other news and resources:

- Final Words from Texas death row: A new book by Neverland Publications compiles the final statements of 515 Texas death row inmates from 1982 until the present day. The book hopes to reveal the humanity of these men and women, raise awareness about capital punishment, and to instigate a grassroots movement to change the character of the death penalty discourse. [Read more and follow the countdown to the campaign launch on the Final Words website](#).
- In [an article by the UK newspaper, Daily Mirror](#), PRI's Programme Director, Nikhil Roy highlights the high rate of mental health problems in prison, particularly for prisoners serving life sentences, and the shortage of mental health care.
- India: [Law Panel gets 400 responses to ban the death penalty](#).

OTHER NEWS AND RESOURCES

Conferences:

- PRI, together with the OHCHR, is organising a high level conference, 'Criminal Justice Reform and Human Rights: Recent Trends', in Jordan on 3-4 November. The conference will be held under the Patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Alhussein.
- Circles4EU: [The Confederation of European Probation](#) is co-organising an international conference in Barcelona in November to discuss the work of the Circles4EU project, a new way to monitor sex offenders after release from prison. Read more [here](#).

New resources and other news:

- [The Howard League for Penal Reform](#) has published its 3rd briefing on sex in prisons, entitled [Coercive sex in prison](#).
- [Amnesty International](#) has published a new report on torture in Nigeria, [Welcome to Hell Fire](#).
- The Open Society Justice Initiative have produced a [short animated film](#) to promote their new publication, [Presumption of Guilt: The Global Overuse of Pre-trial Detention](#).

- Global Study on Legal Aid: UNDP and the UNODC have launched a new study with the objective of providing an overview of the current situation of legal assistance and strengthening the knowledge and evidence base on legal aid. The study is calling for national experts to participate in the survey and to share their contacts: see [here](#).

- Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone: A blog from Advocaid '[Law in the time of Ebola](#)'.
- [Secret plans to GPS tag 75,000 people show privatisation is out of control](#).
- [The failed 'mental revolution': Georgia, crime and criminal justice](#).

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