

PRI's Bangkok Rules E-bulletin: November 2015

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## Bangkok Rules E-Bulletin

*Women in the Criminal Justice System*

November 2015



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](mailto:publications@penalreform.org)

### *What's in this issue?*

- [In the spotlight](#): New statistics show global rise of the number of women in prison
- [PRI news](#) and events
- New [resources](#) and reports
- [In the media](#)

## 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

### [Number of women in prison globally rises: new statistics](#)

The newest edition of the [World Female Imprisonment List](#) by Roy Walmsley at the Institute for Criminal Policy Research / World Prison Brief reveals that currently more than 700,000 women and girls are held in penal institutions around the world, rising from the estimated 625,000 in 2012. The rate of women's imprisonment has grown much faster than male prison population levels since around the year 2000, with the number of women and girls in prison increasing by 50% in the past 15 years, compared to around a 20% increase in the general prison population in that period. The new statistics also show that the number of women and girls in prison has risen particularly sharply in Central and South America and in South-Eastern Asia.

See also a [new report](#) by the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) in Argentina which examines how drug policies have contributed to the rise in the number of women in prison in the Americas.

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## PRI NEWS

### **PRI at the UN General Assembly's 70th session**

#### [UN Panel highlights the need to reduce women's imprisonment](#)

On 20 October, together with the [Thailand Institute of Justice](#) and with the support of Thailand's Permanent Representation to the UN, PRI co-hosted a panel focusing on reducing the imprisonment of women. The [panel](#) highlighted the various reasons why women are imprisoned, the harm prison does and strategies and measures to reduce the number of women in prison.

[Listen to this UN radio interview](#) with PRI's Programme Officer, Olivia Rope, on the discrimination faced by women offenders and prisoners.



*Thailand's Deputy Permanent Representative, H.E. Mr. Chayapan Bamrunghong, welcomes panellists, Olivia Rope (PRI) and Charles Radcliffe (Chief of OHCHR, Global Issues).*

### **[High-level panel on protection of girls in the criminal justice system](#)**

Following the release of a new report by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children (SRSG-VAC), Marta Santos Pais, [‘Safeguarding the rights of girls in the criminal justice system - Preventing violence, stigmatization and deprivation of liberty’](#), PRI spoke at a high-level panel to discuss strategies and promising practices to improve the protection of girls from violence in the criminal justice system on 16 October. See the [report](#) and read a [press release](#) about the panel.

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### **[Links between domestic abuse and women's imprisonment highlighted at OSCE](#)**

At the annual [Human Dimension Implementation Meeting \(HDIM\)](#) of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in October, an oral [statement](#) by PRI highlighted the link between violence against women and women’s imprisonment, and made recommendations for a gender-sensitive approach to cases where woman are convicted of violent offences against their abuser, in line with the Bangkok Rules.

### **[Roundtable on women in Correction and Rehabilitation Centers \(CRCs\) in Jordan](#)**

PRI and the [Danish Institute against Torture – DIGNITY](#), in cooperation with Jordan's Public Security Directorate held a roundtable on '[Women in Correction and Rehabilitation Centers \(CRCs\) in Jordan and compliance with the Bangkok Rules: reality of the situation and lesson learned](#)'.

The main purpose of the discussion was to measure the efforts made by the CRCs to comply with the Bangkok Rules, and discuss the results of studies and research as well as pilot projects carried out by national and international institutions in this regard.

The roundtable followed the publication of a [new study](#) by the Danish Institute against Torture – DIGNITY on the situation of women in Jordanian prisons. See also PRI's research report, [Who are women prisoners: survey results from Jordan and Tunisia](#). Read DIGNITY's [news report on the roundtable](#).

### **[Uganda: Training for women prison staff on Bangkok Rules](#)**

In October, PRI and the [Foundation for Human Rights Initiative](#) (FHRI) delivered training to 23 prison and community service officers in Uganda on the implementation of the Bangkok Rules. The training responded to findings from PRI and FHRI's joint research report, [Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Uganda](#), published last year, covering topics such as responding to women who have experienced violence in the past, providing healthcare, and providing vocational opportunities, with a particular focus on practical ideas for lower resourced systems.

### **[Prison monitors from 13 countries attend summer school on the UN Bangkok Rules](#)**

As part of PRI's work to promote the use of the [UN Bangkok Rules](#) by monitoring bodies, PRI and the University of Bristol, in partnership with the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), organised a four day [summer school](#) in August to address key issues for women in detention and to offer guidance on how to apply the UN Bangkok Rules in the monitoring of women's detention facilities. The summer school was attended by members and staff of National Preventative Mechanisms (NPMs) from 13 different countries.

See PRI/APT's [Guide to gender-sensitive monitoring](#), available in 6 languages.



### **[Guest blog - Using popular culture to address legal rights education in Sierra Leone](#)**

In this [expert blog post](#) for PRI, Simitie Laval, Executive Director of [AdvocAid](#) and women's rights specialist, explains how AdvocAid is using popular media - from cop shows to pop songs - to overcome illiteracy and help women who are arrested or detained to better understand their legal rights.

### **[Coming up soon: New research into the situation of children of prisoners in Uganda](#)**

Later this month, PRI and the [Foundation for Human Rights Initiative \(FHRI\)](#) in Uganda will be publishing a new joint report which assesses the extent to which General Comment No.1 on Article 30 of the African Charter (Children of Incarcerated and Imprisoned Parents and Primary Caregivers) has been implemented in Uganda, and provides recommendations for improvements based on the findings.

The report will be launched at the Conference on the Status of Children's Rights in Africa in Addis Ababa in November.

Keep an eye out for the report at [www.penalreform.org/resources](http://www.penalreform.org/resources) and in the next edition of this e-bulletin.

### **[A new project on gender-sensitive community service and probation orders in Kenya](#)**

In this [new project](#), PRI and the Kenya Probation Service will investigate current practices regarding women who receive community service orders, seeking the views and experiences of magistrates and probation staff, and women who have served community service or probation orders. The findings will be used to develop gender-sensitive offender assessment tools and guidelines, as well as relevant training material. The project is funded by the [Thailand Institute of Justice \(TIJ\)](#).

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## NEW RESOURCES

### Resources from the UN

#### [Training curriculum on women and imprisonment](#)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in cooperation with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and the Thailand Institute of Justice, has published a [Training curriculum on Women and Imprisonment](#).

The curriculum is currently available in English, Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Montenegrin and Serbian.

#### [Information note on non-custodial measures for women offenders](#)

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has recently published an [information note](#) on non-custodial measures for women offenders.

#### [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issues report on overcrowding](#)

The [report](#) addresses human rights implications of the overuse of detention and prison overcrowding and recognises that its effect is especially negative for specific minority groups such as women, children and disabled persons. PRI had advocated for this report and was among the organisations that provided [input](#).

#### [UN report on the impact of the world drug problem on the enjoyment of human rights](#)

This [report](#) by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights the high number of women imprisoned for drug-related offences worldwide, the impact of imprisonment on their families, and the ways in which women are subjected to

discrimination and violence. See a [joint submission](#) by PRI and Harm Reduction International (HRI) to provide input into this report.

### **UN general recommendation on women's access to justice**

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) has adopted [General Recommendation No. 33](#) on women's access to justice. The General Recommendation includes some references to the discrimination and issues faced by women in conflict with the law in accessing justice. For example:

- it notes that some criminal codes discriminate against women by 'criminalising forms of behaviour that are not criminalised or punished as harshly if they are performed by men'; and 'jailing women for petty offences and/or inability to pay bail in such cases';
- it highlights that women suffer from discrimination due to a 'lack of 'gender-sensitive, non-custodial alternatives to detention, a failure to meet the specific needs of women in detention and an absence of gender-sensitive monitoring and independent review mechanisms'.

### **Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues**

The [report](#) addresses human rights of persons belonging to a minority who come into contact with the criminal justice system and highlights particular obstacles in safeguarding the rights of women belonging to minority groups.

The report will inform a [Forum](#) on this issue in Geneva on 24-25 November. PRI's Regional Director from Middle East North Africa Office, Taghreed Jaber, will speak about migrant workers in the criminal justice system and PRI's delegation will also be raising awareness of the issues faced by women prisoners from minority groups.

## **Reports and resources on women in the criminal justice system**

### **Global**

#### **Gender in Tunisian prison reform**

Following a roundtable in Tunis on 'The Bangkok Rules: Challenges and Priorities for Tunisia' in May 2014, the Geneva Center for the [Democratic Control of the Armed Forces](#) (DCAF) has published a [report](#) which examines detention conditions for women and provides practical recommendations to amend the current legislation and practice.

#### **Report: The Impact of Drug Policy on Human Rights – The Experience in the Americas**

The Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) in Argentina has published a [report](#) demonstrating the disproportionate effect of the current drug policy on women and their situation in the penitentiary system.

### **[DIGNITY: the Danish Institute against Torture publishes a new study on the situation of women in Jordanian prisons](#)**

This [new study](#) examines the particular needs, issues and vulnerabilities of imprisoned women in Jordan and the prison system's compliance with international standards on the treatment of women offenders.

### **[Report: Justice Data Lab Statistics for the UK](#)**

This May 2015 [report](#) from the Ministry of Justice UK looks at women offenders' engagement with community-based women's centres and their re-offending rates.

### **[Tedx – We need to talk about prisons](#)**

In this [Tedx video](#), Sara Hyde, left-wing thinker on women and the criminal justice system, talks about the person behind the 'criminal' and what it looks like behind bars, discusses the concept of justice and pleads for revision of the current criminal justice system.

## **From the United States**

### **[Photo Series – Human Cost of America's Drug Policy](#)**

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) has recently published a [photo essay](#) on women detained in the Buen Pastor prison in Costa Rica to provide an insight into the consequences of the country's drug policies on imprisoned women and their families.

### **[Women, Incarcerated Series](#)**

This [investigative series](#) by [RH Reality Check](#) reveals widespread abuse of women in prisons and jails and indicates systemic problems in the treatment of women in the criminal justice system.

### **[Report: Pregnant and behind bars](#)**

This [report](#) by [In These Times](#) reveals a severe lack of adequate medical care and inhumane treatment of pregnant women in the US prison system.

### **[Report on medical problems of state and federal prisoners and jail inmates](#)**



A 2015 Bureau of Justice Statistics special report, [Medical Problems of State and Federal Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011-12](#), highlights the statistical differences in weight changes during imprisonment between imprisoned males and females.

Additional information is provided in the following reports:

- [The Impact of Incarceration on Obesity: Are Prisoners with Chronic Diseases Becoming Overweight and Obese during Their Confinement?](#)
- [Obesity Behind Bars: Study Reveals Intriguing Information about Diet, Exercise among Prisoners](#)

### [Handbook for recovery after a suicide attempt](#)

Published by the US-based Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the [handbook](#) contains both personal accounts from survivors and practical advice and tools to move forward.

### [Californian women's prison introduces pilot mental health program dealing with trauma](#)

The Californian Department of Corrections has launched a pilot project called [Beyond Violence](#) at two women-only prisons, which aims to help women with trauma histories. First evaluations are positive.

### [Justice Home: The program that is keeping women out of prison – and saving money](#)

The Women's Prison Association (WPA) has launched an [innovative programme](#) in New York designed to address the underlying causes of women's offending by offering services (such as housing and food stamps and to counselling sessions for domestic violence, substance abuse) to women facing felony charges. Early results show that the majority of the women stop criminal activity – and the programme is significantly cheaper than prison.

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## IN THE MEDIA

Mexico: [Indigenous Women in Chiapas Prison Find Legal Advocates](#)

Scotland: [New plans for women in custody announced](#)

Scotland: [Scottish Parliament addressed on women in the criminal justice system](#)

Sierra Leone: [Advocaid win Namati Justice prize for their work with women prisoners in Sierra Leone](#)

South Africa: [Judge's report describes 'sickening conditions' at Pollsmoor prison](#)

Sudan: [Young woman risks 20 lashes for 'indecent dressing' – UN experts urge Sudan to overturn "outrageous conviction"](#)

UK: [One J-Cloth per day?](#)

UK: [Woman serving eight-week prison sentence found dead in her cell](#)

UK: [More than 80 per cent of female inmates locked up for non-violent offences, new figures show](#)

UK: [Female inmates complain about conditions of Birmingham City Jail](#)

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

USA: [Corrections System Fails Female Prisoners: One Woman's Story](#)

USA: [Prisoner found dead at women's correctional facility](#)

USA: [Transgender inmate Ashley Diamond released from Georgia prison after pressure from SPLC lawsuit](#) (see also '[Out of Jail, Still Not Free](#)')

USA: [Jail to house transgender inmates with preferred gender](#)

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

*We encourage you to send us any new materials, feedback, news items, blogs, etc... to share with this network of people interested in women and the criminal justice system. Please send to: [info@penalreform.org](mailto:info@penalreform.org).*

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