

Deaths in prison – an online workshop for detention monitors

Invitation and concept note

Penal Reform International with the support of the *prison*DEATH team are organising an online workshop for members and staff of detention monitoring bodies to improve awareness, data, monitoring, reporting and follow-up on prison deaths.

The workshop will be held online in English on **Thursday 17 October 2024, 10.00 – 13.00 CET**.

If you are a member or staff of a detention monitor **register for free** by 1 October 2024 at <https://tinyurl.com/DeathsInPrison>.

Context

Mortality rates are up to 50% higher for people in prison than for people in the wider community. People die in prison as a result of a wide range of causes including torture and other forms of violence, self harm, and environmental factors like overcrowding, poor conditions of detention and inadequate access to healthcare. This raises serious concerns for the protection of human rights, public health, and prison management.

Detention monitoring bodies such as the UN Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture (SPT), the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and designated National Preventive Mechanisms play a key role in driving change. They employ a toolbox of strategies to bring about change. These include unannounced monitoring visits, dialogues, published and unpublished reports with key recommendations.

Monitors can play a particularly important role in recommending measures *to prevent* prison deaths and enhance transparency around statistics, investigations and accountability. For example, by pushing for improved data and assessing common causes so that states are held accountable and encouraging reform towards human rights-based responses to deaths in prison.

Objectives of the workshop

Equip members and staff supporting detention monitoring bodies with

- 1) Knowledge on the issues at stake with deaths in prison, including the common shortcomings in recording and investigating deaths in prison
- 2) Practical knowledge and tools to monitor, report and follow-up on issues with deaths in prisons

Programme highlights

Thursday 17 October 2024, 10.00 – 13.00 CET

Methodology

With interactive, adult learning methodologies, this workshop will focus on being practically oriented with the focus being on detention monitoring. Case studies, presentations and practical exercises will ensure that participants are equipped with applicable knowledge of the issues to apply the learning to their monitoring-related work. The workshop materials will be based on work undertaken by the *prisonDEATH* team¹ and Penal Reform International, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

Lead facilitators and experts

- Penal Reform International
- University of Nottingham
- United Nations experts
- Forensics experts
- Members of international/regional monitoring bodies

Topics to be covered

- Common causes of deaths in prison
- Defining deaths in prison
- Prisoner death statistics (comprehensive, disaggregated, contextualised)
- Immediate responses to deaths in prison
- Practical considerations in monitoring prisoner deaths
- Investigating prisoner deaths (to highlight systemic hazards, ensuring Terms of Reference for bodies investigating, and published methodology along with transparency of evidence base of judgments and recommendations)
- Preventing prisoner deaths

¹ Dr Philippa Tomczak (University of Nottingham, UK), Dr Róisín Mulgrew (University of Galway, Ireland), and Dr Catherine Appleton (St Olavs University Hospital and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway).



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Key documents

- Penal Reform International(PRI)/ University of Nottingham (UON), Deaths in prison: Examining causes, responses, and prevention, 2022
<https://www.penalreform.org/resource/deaths-in-prison-examining-causes-responses-and-prevention/>
- PRI/UON, Investigating deaths in prison: A guide to a human rights-based approach, 2023,
<https://www.penalreform.org/resource/investigating-deaths-in-prison-a-guide/>
- UON/University of Galloway, Improving death investigations to promote safety, Case study: Prisoner deaths, September 2023, <https://www.safesoc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/improving-death-investigations-to-promote-safety-policy-brief-sept-23-3.pdf>
- UON, Improving prisoner death statistics, Policy Brief, February 2024,
<https://www.safesoc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/improving-prisoner-death-statistics-policy-brief-february-2024.pdf>
- Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Morris Tidball-Binz, April 2023: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5329-deaths-prisons-report-special-rapporteur-extra-judicial-summary>

A **short guidance** note will be produced for detention monitors, which will draw on the above listed research and body of work by the *prisonDEATH* and PRI teams, discussions at the workshop and presentations.

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