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Judges allegedly sentenced more black children to prison: The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services promised to contact the South Africa Human Rights Commission to investigate allegations that judges in the Free State Province sentenced more black children to prisons and diverted their white counterparts into rehabilitation programmes. The Committee spokesman, Lokile Molefe said that their visits to Brandfort and Grootvlei prisons revealed that there were many black children in detention. Committee chairperson, Dennis Bloem, said that he was disturbed to learn that judges imposed severe sentences on black offenders and lenient sentences on white offenders. Reported by Zinhle Mapumulo, 31 January 2008, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=695503>

CSPRI tells Parliament imprisonment of children should be last resort: Mr. Lukas Muntingh of the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) told Parliament during the public hearings on the Child Justice Bill that the constitution provided that imprisonment for children should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible duration. He added that for reasons of international law and child rights treaties to which South Africa is a signatory, legislation giving effect to this imperative is urgently needed. He commended government for reducing the number of children in prisons but warned that about 6000 children are circulated through the prison system annually which is a cause of concern. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 20 February 2007, Business Day at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A709929> see also

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200802200177.html>

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

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Minister drops charges against prison whistle-blower: The Minister of Correctional Services, Ngconde Balfour, who had instituted a defamation suit and other charges against Dr Paul Theron who alerted the Office of the Inspecting Judge about the unsatisfactory health conditions at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town, dropped all the charges. Dr Theron said that he was delighted that the charges had been dropped and called it a victory on his side. He said that he will write a book about his 22 years experience at Pollsmoor prison and that he intended to establish a non-governmental organisation to promote health in prisons. Reported by Helen Bamford, 3 February 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080203090724243C565511

Police officer charged over parolee's arrest: Captain Mthozami Madikane of Goodwood police station in Cape Town was criminally charged with defeating the ends of justice following the row that erupted over the arrest of Mr. Tony Yengeni, former ANC Chief Whip, for alleged drunken driving in November 2007. Mr. Yengeni is a convicted fraudster on parole. Reported by Andisiwe Makinana, 4 February 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080204112459194C305616

Court clerk charged with helping prisoners to escape: Siyabonga Tom, a clerk at the New Brighton Court in Port Elizabeth, appeared before the magistrate's court in Port Elizabeth to answer charges relating to aiding four murder accused to escape from lawful custody. The prosecution alleged that Mr. Siyabonga was paid or was to be paid R 4,000 for facilitating the escape which resulted in the stabbing and shooting of a court orderly and a senior police officer respectively. Reported by Hendrick Mphande, 4 February 2008, The Herald, at

http://www.epherald.co.za/herald/news/n16_04022008.htm

Culture change needed for prison whistle blowers to work: Open Democracy Advice Centre CEO,

Alison Tilley, said that for the law protecting prison whistle blowers to work, there had to be cultural change at the Department of Correctional Services. Alison's statement followed an incident where a prison doctor, Dr. Paul Theron, was suspended from work and persecuted by the Department of Correctional Services for reporting the poor healthcare services at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town to the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons. The High Court had ordered the Department of Correctional Services to allow Dr. Theron go back and work at Pollsmoor but the Department disobeyed court orders. Reported by Ernest Mabuza, 5 February 2008, Business Day, at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/topstories.aspx?ID=BD4A698892>

Warders investigated over prisoners' escape: Correctional Services spokesman Zukisa Ndumani said that prison warders were being investigated for the escape of five awaiting trial prisoners from Bizana Prison in the Eastern Cape. However, Mr. Ndumani did not disclose how many officials were being investigated. Two inmates were rearrested shortly after the escape and the other three were still on the run. The inmates were suspects in serious criminal offences ranging from armed robbery to murder. Reported by Kamva Mokoena, 7 February 2008, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=700286>

Judge slams maximum security prison over prisoner's use of drugs: Pretoria High Court acting Judge, Solly Sithole, while commenting on an incident when an accused came to court under the influence of drugs, said that the fact that inmates could obtain drugs in C-Max "spoke volumes" to the court and "raised many questions about the security." The remarks were made after Thabo Masinga, an inmate at C-Max who was awaiting trial for the rape and attempted murder of two prison nurses told his advocate that he had had some drugs (dagga) for his nerves and felt fine to take the stand. The lawyer said that he felt it was irresponsible for his client to testify under the influence of drugs and the Court postponed the case and ordered the accused to be brought back to court when he was sober. Reported by Zelda Venter, 7 February 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080207062112635C122137

Warders allegedly steal prisoners' money: Two warders in KwaZulu-Natal are being investigated for allegedly stealing prisoners' money. One warder was stationed at Sevontein Prison and allegedly stole close to R1,1 million from prisoners' accounts. This money had been deposited by prisoners' relatives and friends for the use by prisoners because the Department of Correctional Services' policy does not allow prisoners to be given money directly. Another prison official at Kokstad Correctional Center was suspended after the disappearance of R650 000 from prisoners' medical accounts. Reported by Mhlaba Memela and Canaan Mdletshe, 20 February 2008, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=709823>

Detainees allegedly lack medical care: Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) alleged that South African police were denying detained undocumented HIV-positive migrants access to the crucial food needed to continue antiretroviral therapy and many were denied access to healthcare. Médecins Sans Frontières spokesperson, Alessandra Vilas Boas, said that when the organisation visited one of the police cells, they were able to dispense HIV medication to some detainees but that the police allegedly denied them access to many more prisoners who could have needed treatment. The organisation's nurse, Bianca Tolboom, said that other detainees were suffering from tuberculosis but lacked medication. However, the police denied the Médecins Sans Frontières allegations. Reported by PlusNews, 4 February 2008, at <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76560>

Prisoners allegedly denied food: 11 murder suspects being detained at C-Max prison in Pretoria told the court that they were being denied food by the prison authorities. The prisoners alleged that they were only being given one meal a day instead of three. However, prison authorities denied the allegations and said that the prisoners were being given three meals a day but that some of them refused to eat. Reported by Dudu Busani, 7 February 2008, <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=700385>

Prisoner allegedly assaulted by fellow prisoners: Richard Engelbrecht, who was on trial for allegedly raping and murdering a schoolgirl, Annestacia Wiese, was afraid to attend his trial because he had been assaulted by fellow prisoners while being transported to the Cape High Court. His lawyer contacted the investigation officer and separate transport arrangements were made for Engelbrecht to appear before court. Reported by Fatima Schroeder, 12 February 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080212040808350C183968

Prison fails to release inmate despite court order: Prison officials at Voorberg Prison in Porterville, Cape Town, could not release a prisoner despite the High Court order for his immediate release. The Cape High Court ruled that Mr. Mncedisi Plaatjies who had been in detention for assault should be released but prison officials said that Mr. Plaatjies had to spend more days in prison because they were waiting for a written court order to that effect. Mr. Plaatjies's lawyer said that he was to call the prison and court authorities to establish why his client was still being detained. Reported by Karen Breytenbach, 13 February 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080213032803883C856802

Correctional Services facing lawsuits totalling millions of Rand: The Minister of Correctional Services, Ngconde Balfour, raised concerns over the numerous lawsuits filed against his Department resulting from the abuse of prisoners' and staffs' rights. The Minister also rebuked Department attorneys and officials for delaying to settle some straight forward claims against the Department. While addressing the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, the Minister said that between March 2007 and January 2008, the Department faced R89-million in lawsuits resulting from assault cases either by warders on prisoners or by prisoners on prison staff. The majority of these claims were from the Eastern Cape

Province. Reported by Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, 13 February 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080213094400745C305271

Prisoner sues Correctional Services Minister over skin infection: Cheslyn May, who was a prisoner at St Albans Prison in Port Elizabeth took the Minister of Correctional Services to court after allegedly suffering an allergic skin reaction due to the negligent prescription and dispensing of medication by the Minister's employees. Mr. May is seeking damages from the Minister for the allergic skin reaction. The Court also ordered the Minister to allow Mr. May's legal team to visit him in prison and take photographs of his skin to be tendered as evidence in support of his case. Reported by Lynn Williams, 15 February 2008, The Herald, at http://www.theherald.co.za/herald/news/n17_15022008.htm

Warders to be disciplined for the death of a prisoner: KwaZulu-Natal Correctional Services Provincial spokesperson, Nkosinathi Nhleko said that an internal investigation into the circumstances leading to the death of a prisoner, Mr. Senzo Mazibuko, at New Prison in Pietermaritzburg in January this year had been completed and that prison warders implicated would be punished. Mr. Nhleko added that the investigation established that the deceased prisoner was taken in an office and assaulted by a number of warders. Mr. Mazibuko died on arrival in hospital. Reported by Mhlaba Memela, 20 February 2008, Sowetan at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=709727> see also <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=709811>

TRIAL & SENTENCING

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Prisoner loses appeal: Paulus Benjamin Wiese, who was sentenced to an effective 36 years imprisonment for murder, rape, kidnapping and unlawful possession of a firearm lost his appeal to the full bench of the Pietermaritzburg High Court. Wiese's lawyer had argued before court that the sentence imposed on his client was too severe. The High Court, in dismissing the appeal, said that it was not persuaded that the sentencing court erred in imposing the sentence it did. Reported by Ingrid Oellermann, 4 February 2008, The Witness, at [http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global\[_id\]=3260](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global[_id]=3260)

Prisoner who raped and attempted to murder prison nurse fit to stand trial, psychiatrist: Dr Herman Pretorius, psychiatrist, told the Pretoria High Court Judge that there were no signs that Thabo Amos Masinga, a Baviaanspoort prisoner who allegedly attacked and almost killed two nurses, had suffered from psychosis during the incident in March 2005. Mr. Masinga had told court that he was not criminally liable for his actions due to the use of drugs (dagga) and cocaine and had no recollection of the incident. Dr. Pretorius said that although Mr. Masinga had abused different kinds of substances before, he was fit to stand trial because he knew what was taking place at the time that he raped and attempted to murder the nurses. Reported by Sapa, 5 February 2008, Maili & Guardian, at

http://www.mg.co.za/articlepage.aspx?area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/&articleid=331555

Court orders Justice Minister to consider political prisoners' pardon applications: Pretoria High Court judge, Willie Seriti, ruled that Justice Minister, Brigitte Mabandla, had failed to exercise her constitutional duties diligently over the applications of 384 prisoners for presidential pardons. The judge gave the Minister three months within which to deal with the applications. The prisoners had not heard from the Minister's office for four years since they filed their applications for a presidential pardon. The Justice Department spokesperson said that the Department respected the court's ruling but added that they were disappointed and were weighing the prospects of appeal. Reported by Sapa, 11 February 2008, The Witness, at [http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global\[_id\]=3560](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global[_id]=3560)

Psychology Professor said prisoner who attempted to murder prison nurse was psychotic: Psychology Professor, Wicus Coetzee told Pretoria High Court that Mr. Thabo Amos Masinga, prisoner who allegedly raped and attempted to murder two nurses at a prison hospital was sometimes psychotic and needed further neurological and psychiatric assessment. However, a panel of three psychiatrists declared Masinga fit to stand trial and not suffering from any mental illness. But Professor Wicus Coetzee said that when he observed Mr. Masinga he established that he lived 'in a totally different world' where he heard voices that never existed and saw people that were never there. Reported by Sapa, 12 February 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080212185048555C638338

Juvenile offender reformed in prison: The lawyer of a 14 year old boy who was sentenced to seven months imprisonment at Leeuwkop Juvenile Prison for stealing two cell phones and a pouch of CDs told the court that his client had reformed while in prison and should be released on bail pending appeal of the sentence to the High Court. The lawyer said that while in prison the boy had finished three courses that equipped him with various life management skills. He added that the sentence imposed on the boy was too harsh because he was so young and had no previous convictions. Reported on 15 February 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080215032236417C925813

Prisoner spends a year in prison waiting for a bed in a psychiatric hospital: Mr. Godfrey Macheke, who has been in prison since January 2007 awaiting-trial for allegedly kidnapping and murdering his wife, was in February 2008 finally able to secure a bed at a psychiatric hospital for his assessment to establish whether he was fit to stand trial. Since May 2007, when the district surgeon recommended that Mr. Macheke should be assessed by a psychiatrist, his case had been postponed on various occasions because there was no vacant bed at Weskoppies psychiatric hospital for his assessment. Reported by Sapa, 21 February 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080221120532892C791982

Prisoner punished for assaulting another inmate: The Barberton magistrate's court in Mpumalanga Province sentenced Mr. Mark Scott-Crossley, a prisoner serving five years' imprisonment for being an accessory after the fact to murder, to two years' imprisonment or a fine of 4 000 for assaulting a fellow

inmate, Mr. Jacobus Cordier, who suffered brain damage as a result of the assault. However, Mr. Scott-Crossley testified that he acted in self defence when Cordier pushed him. Because of the brain-damage Cordier was released from prison and he was staying in a home for brain-damaged patients. Reported by Sapa, 24 February 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080224152219392C812198 see also [http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global\[_id\]=4222](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global[_id]=4222)

Committee on Presidential Pardon visits prisons: The Committee responsible for receiving applications from political prisoners who qualify for a presidential pardon started visiting prisons in the country to collect and assess applications. The Kwa-Zulu Natal Regional Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services, Nkosinathi Nhleko, said that the Committee was the first visit those prisons with high concentrations of political prisoners. By February 2008 the Committee had already visited Pietermaritzburg and was soon to start at Westville prison in Durban. Reported by Sharlene Packree, 28 February 2008, The Witness, at [http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global\[_id\]=4402](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global[_id]=4402)

OVERCROWDING

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Overcrowded prisons a huge concern, Minister: The Minister of Correctional Services, Ngconde Balfour, told participants at a national conference on corrections that government had identified overcrowding as a huge problem. The Minister added that other government departments should also participate in rehabilitating and integrating offenders. He commended civil society organisations for their social development work and invited them to work hand in hand with his office for a strategic plan that would support the White Paper. Reported by sabcnews, 5 February 2008, at

http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,163649,00.html

Correctional Services to deal with overcrowding: Chief Deputy Commissioner of Correctional Services, Jennifer Schreiner, while speaking at a stakeholders' conference in Pretoria said that managing large numbers of awaiting-trial detainees in South Africa's prisons, including housing them in separate facilities, was one of the Department of Correctional Service's key projects for its 2008-09 financial year. Schreiner said a project team was identifying suitable facilities across the country that could be converted into remand detention facilities. She said the large numbers of awaiting-trial prisoners made rehabilitation difficult because many warders spent most of the time transporting these prisoners for court appearances. Reported by Ernest Mabuza, 6 February 2008, Business Day, at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/topstories.aspx?ID=BD4A699669> see also

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080206060709256C773810

Kimberly's new generation prison to be ready by 2009: The National Commissioner of Correctional

Services, Mr. Vernie Petersen, told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that one of the eight new generation prisons would be completed by February 2009. The Kimberly prison will accommodate 3000 prisoners. Commissioner Petersen added that other prisons of the same kind would be completed by 2010 and 2011 in East London, Klerksdorp, Nigel, Paarl and Port Shepstone. He also told the Portfolio Committee that the construction of prisons at Leeuwkop in Gauteng and at Polokwane in Limpopo had been suspended pending the outcome of a feasibility study. Reported by Sapa 19 February 2008, Mail and Guardian, at

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=332743&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/

More money for prisoners' accommodation: Finance Minister Trevor Manuel's 2008/09 budget allocated R10 billion over three years for curbing crime. This money will be spent on programmes such as expanding police staff to reach 200 000 by 2010/11; employing more prosecutors, judges and magistrates; further investment in forensic science laboratories, constructing 40 new police stations, and availing accommodation for 18 000 prisoners. Reported by Sapa, 21 February 2008, The Witness, at

[http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global\[_id\]=4078](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global[_id]=4078) see also

[http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global\[_id\]=4094](http://www.witness.co.za/?showcontent&global[_id]=4094) see also

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/SpecialReports/Budget2008/Article.aspx?id=710390>

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University to train senior correctional officers: The Department of Correctional Services and the University of Witwatersrand signed a R 3.9 million contract for two leadership development programmes aimed at senior Correctional Services staff. 184 senior managers were expected to participate in the Executive Leadership Development Programme and the Certificate Leadership Development Programme aimed equipping them with the necessary skills needed to accelerate the transformation of the Department. Reported by Sapa, 15 February 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080215093955666C925370

Prison escapee arrested: Mr. Wandile Mpanza, one of the 10 inmates who escaped from Empangeni's Qalakabusha Correctional Centre in August 2007 was arrested at his home in Soweto. Police Superintendent Vincent Mdunge said Mr. Mpanza, who was serving a prison sentence for the murder of a policeman, had been on the run since his escape. Superintendent Mdunge thanked the arresting officers for the job well done. Reported by Jeff Wicks, 22 February 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080222045844835C970392

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Rwanda

Gacaca court sentences man to 30 years imprisonment: A traditional Gacaca court in Gihundwe sector, Rusizi district sentenced Mr. Aloys Mujabwamito to 30 years imprisonment for committing acts of genocide. Mr. Mujabwamito's accomplices, Victor Habineza and Damascene Nzacahayo were sentenced to 25 and 30 years imprisonment respectively. The Gacaca courts are not presided over by judges but by persons of high esteem in society. Reported by Hirondele News Agency, 13 February 2008, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200802140087.html>

Zimbabwe

Court rules Briton can be extradited to Equatorial Guinea: Zimbabwe's High Court ruled that Simon Mann, the British ex-SAS officer imprisoned in Zimbabwe on arms charges in 2004, could be extradited to Equatorial Guinea to face trial over an attempted coup. Mr. Simon had appealed against his extradition on the ground that he might be tortured in Equatorial Guinea. His lawyer had contemplated petitioning the Supreme Court to reverse the High Court's ruling. Reported by BBC News, 31 January 2008, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7219025.stm>

Briton extradited to Equatorial Guinea without his lawyers knowledge: Simon Mann, a British citizen who was in detention in Zimbabwe since 2004 on arms charges, was extradited by the Zimbabwean government to Equatorial Guinea without his legal team's knowledge to face charges of an attempted coup. His lawyers were in the process of lodging an appeal to the Supreme Court against the High Court's ruling that Mr. Mann could be extradited to Equatorial Guinea where he allegedly stood a risk of being tortured. Reported by BBC News, 1 February 2008, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7221948.stm>

Prisons chief orders his officers to vote for incumbent president: The head of Zimbabwe's prison service, Retired Major General Paradzayi Zimondi, ordered his officers to vote for President Robert Mugabe and threatened to resign if Mr. Mugabe lost the elections. While officiating at a function at which he conferred ranks to various senior prison warders, the head of the prisons service said that he would only remain in his employment if Mugabe was elected the President and said that he was giving an order to his warders to vote for him. Reported on 29 February 2008, Reuters, at <http://africa.reuters.com/top/news/usnBAN930928.html>

Uganda

Prisoners pass national exams: Several prisoners at the country's maximum security prison, Luzira, passed their national examinations with good grades. The youngest of them was 19 years old and the oldest 60 years old. The Senior Welfare Officer, Mr. John Kagambo said that many inmates were interested in pursuing their studies but the Prisons Department lacked sufficient funds and full-time teachers to facilitate their studies. He called upon members of the public to assist in this regard. Reported on 8 February 2008, The New Vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/610714>

Court told treason suspect died in custody: Kampala High Court Judge, Mary Maitum, was told by the Senior State Attorney that Mr. Ismail Jjuuko Nakibinge, who was on treason charges, died at Luzira prison hospital. The State Attorney tendered the death certificate in court as evidence that the prisoner had died. The judge discontinued the charges against the deceased inmate. Reported by Lydia Mukisa, 10 February 2008, The Monitor, at http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/sun_news/Treason_suspect_dies_in_Luzira_prison.shtml

Prison warders to personally compensate their torture victims: The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabasaija, while speaking at the opening of a workshop, said that prison warders who tortured prisoners would personally compensate their victims. He said that in the past it was the Attorney General who would be sued when prison warders violated prisoners' rights but that that had changed and prison warders will personally be liable for abusing prisoners' rights. Dr. Byabasaija added that prison warders who violated prisoners' rights would be punished severely and also dismissed from the Prisons Service. Reported by Charles Ariko, 27 February 2008, The New Vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/613912>

Democratic Republic of Congo

16 prisoners allegedly died of hunger and poor health: Kemal Saiki, spokesman for Congo's UN Peacekeeping Mission said that 16 prisoners, some of whom were awaiting trial had died of hunger and poor health at Congo's Mbuji Mayi prison in Kasai Orientale Province. Mr. Saiki said that the prison was overcrowded and the government did not have a budget for prisoners' food and healthcare. He added that relatives and friends of the inmates who wanted to deliver food to them had to bribe prison officials. Mr. Saiki said that visitors had to pay to see their loved ones. He warned that the situation at the prison was 'catastrophic and worrying.' Reported by Joe Bavier, 20 February 2008, Reuters, at <http://africa.reuters.com/wire/news/usnL20746389.html> see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080220192416311C828574

Eritrea

Journalists died in prison: Reporters without Borders (RwB) alleged that many Eritrean journalists were being detained under inhumane prison conditions and that some had died in prison either because of

torture or inhumane treatment. Rwb also alleged that in cases where journalists died in prison, their relatives were not informed and their bodies were not returned to them for a decent burial. Report by Rwb, February 2008, at http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=25386

Refugees released from Israel prison: 50 Eritrean refugees who had been detained in an Israeli prison were freed by the Israel authorities and transported to the Capital, Tel Aviv. The refugees said that while in prison they were treated well but that they always longed for their freedom. All of them were given working permits that would help them find employment in Israel for a short period of time. Reported by Vered Lee, 17 February 2008, Haaretz, at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/954778.html>

Swaziland

Prison officials' application to form union rejected: The High Court in the Swaziland capital, Mbabane, dismissed an application by police and prison staff to allow them to form a labour union. The court held that the applicants could not form a labour union because they performed essential protection services and that they were not ordinary employees. Their lawyer, Mr. Thulani Maseko, said that he was going to appeal against the High Court judgement. Reported by IOL, 14 February 2008, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=84&art_id=nw20080214132624192C696369

Equatorial Guinea

British prisoner shown on television: Simon Mann, a Briton accused of plotting a coup in Equatorial Guinea, was shown on television and appeared to be in good health despite fears of torture. Mann was extradited from Zimbabwe without the knowledge of his lawyers. The prison conditions in Equatorial Guinea are alleged to be poor and that many prisoners were at the risk of starvation. However, the Guinean government denied such allegations. Reported by BBC News, 8 February 2008, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7234280.stm>

Foreign prisoner said prison conditions 'not too bad': Mr. Simon Mann, a British citizen who was secretly extradited from Zimbabwe to Equatorial Guinea to stand trial for the allegedly attempting to overthrow the Equatorial Guinea government in a coup, told the US envoy who visited him in prison that the prison conditions 'were not too bad.' A Guinean newspaper reported that Mann was being detained in the 'executive wing' section of the prison where he could pay for the items and facilities he needed. Reported by Sapa-AFP, 8 February 2008, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/world.aspx?ID=BD4A701621>

British envoy visits Briton in prison: The national radio reported that David Harris, a British diplomat, visited Simon Mann, the suspected British mastermind of a failed 2004 coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea, in his prison in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. Mr. Harris' visit was requested by the British government and the aim was to see the conditions under which Mr. Mann was being detained. Mr. Mann was extradited from Zimbabwe without his lawyer's knowledge when he was still fighting against his

extradition on the ground that he stood a risk of being tortured in Equatorial Guinea. Reported by Sapa-AFP, 13 February 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080212222904336C112527

Nigeria

Judicial officers' strike affects court business: A nationwide strike by junior members of the judiciary over what they called poor working conditions crippled court business and many cases were suspended as a result. Judges in various courts ranging from the High Court to the Supreme Court were prevented from entering their offices as the junior officers through their trade union demanded that they could not allow them access unless the government listened to them and increased their salaries. The government ordered the striking officers to go back to work before their issues could be dealt with. Reported on 5 February 2008, Leadership Nigeria, at

http://www.leadershipnigeria.com/product_info.php?products_id=21613 see also

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200802050319.html> see also

http://dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2002&Itemid=0

Judicial officers' strike affected prisoners: A nationwide strike by judiciary workers under the umbrella of Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria led to the postponement of many cases and the cancellation of many bail applications. This led to many prisoners who would have had their bail applications heard spending more days in prison. Prisoners from different prisons in Nigeria expressed concern over the strike and appealed to the government to find a solution for the striking workers so that their cases could be disposed of quickly. Reported by Innocent Anaba, 12 February 2008, Vanguard, at

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2105&Itemid=46

Minister says majority of prisoners are awaiting-trial: The Minister of Interior, Maj-Gen. Godwin Abbe (rtd) said that the majority of prisoners in Bauchi State were awaiting trial and called upon State Chief Justices to ensure that measures are put in place for courts to expeditiously deal with criminal cases. Bauchi State governor, Alhaji Isa Yuguda, informed the Minister that it was important for his State to strengthen prison reform measures. Reported by Vanguard, 15 February 2008, at

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2315&Itemid=47

Amsterdam Mayor condemns executions: The Mayor of Amsterdam in The Netherlands, Dr. Job Cohen, said that at least seven prisoners on death row in Nigeria were hanged in the last two years and that such executions meant that Nigeria was not committed to the abolition of the death penalty. He called upon the Nigerian Federal government to work towards that abolition of the death penalty by first announcing a moratorium on all executions. Opinion by Dr. Cohen, 15 February 2008, Vanguard, at

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2304&Itemid=84 see also

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2303&Itemid=84

Rebel leader allegedly tortured: The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) said

that one of its leaders, Comrade Henry Okah, was tortured while in detention in Angola before being extradited clandestinely to Nigeria where he was detained incommunicado. MEND also alleged that Comrade Okah was detained under inhumane conditions in Angolan prisons where he was denied sufficient food and reading materials. Reported by Emma Amaize and Jimitota Onoyume, 17 February 2007, Vanguard, at

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2442&Itemid=42

300 babies born in prisons between 1999 and 2007: The House of Representatives Chairman of the Committee on Women Affairs, Rep. Benny Lar, said that more than 300 babies were born in Nigerian prisons under unclear circumstances. Mrs. Lar said that investigations were being conducted to establish how female inmates fell pregnant. Reported by Tordue Salem, Vanguard, 21 February 2008, at

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2976&Itemid=47 See also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200802210492.html>

Prisons boss says escapes will never happen again: Delta State Comptroller of Prisons, Mr. Charles Ahaotu, said that his office had implemented stringent security measures to ensure that no prison escapes ever happened again. He said that all the prisons would be intact all the time and that security lapses that led to prison breaks in the past had been addressed. Reported by Austin Ogwuda, 21 February 2008, Vanguard, at

http://www.vanguardngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2967&Itemid=44

Kenya

Judge orders Prisons to produce post-mortem report: High Court judge, Mr Justice Onesmus Mutungi gave the Prisons Department 14 days within which to produce a report explaining to the family of the deceased prisoner the circumstances under which he died. The family of the deceased prisoner, Mr Edward Muchene, claimed that the Prisons Department never gave them a report detailing the circumstances under which their loved one passed away. A Prisons officer, Mr Japhet Bondo, who was before court to explain why they had not availed a post-mortem report to the relatives of the deceased, said that such reports were normally prepared by the police and not the Prisons Department. Reported by Nation Correspondent, 15 February 2008, The Nation, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200802150444.html>

Algeria

Agency wants information about Algerian prisoners in Libya: Algeria's government-backed National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights said that it asked the Algeria foreign ministry to contact Libyan authorities for an explanation of the state of Algeria prisoners in Libya. There were 54 Algerian prisoners in Libya some on death row, life imprisonment and others still in detention despite being pardoned by the Libyan President. Many have allegedly been waiting trial for over five years. Reported by Reuters, 13 February 2008, at

<http://africa.reuters.com/top/news/usnBAN323464.html>

Sierra Leone

United Nations train prisons officials on human rights protection: The Human Rights and Rule of Law Section of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) in collaboration with Prison Watch Sierra Leone and the National Human Rights Commission organised a three-day training programme for prison monitors across the country which commenced on 27 February 2008. The training aimed at enhancing the capacity of the participants in the protection of human rights of detainees. Press Release by UNIOSIL, 26 February 2008, at <http://appablog.wordpress.com/2008/02/26/sierra-leone-uniosil-collaborates-with-prison-watch-and-human-rights-commission-to-enhance-protection-of-prisoners%E2%80%99-rights/> see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200802261073.html>

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