



# 30 Days Dae Izinsuku

Project of the  
Community Law Centre

CSPRI '30 Days/Dae/Izinsuku' February 2009

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February 2009

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## GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

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**President could be asked to inquire into prisons catering contracts:** The chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, reportedly said that there was a possibility that South African President, Kgalema Motlanthe, could be asked 'to launch a commission of inquiry into the awarding of a contract worth hundreds of millions of rands to the Bosasa group of companies.' Mr. Bloem said that his Committee 'viewed the matter in a very serious light.' Reported by Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, 3 February 2009, IOL, at [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=iol1233679371803B516](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=iol1233679371803B516) see also [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=iol1233610721817A162](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=iol1233610721817A162)

**Correctional Services Minister accused of interfering in the tender process:** The chairman of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, reportedly accused the Minister of Correctional Services, Ngconde Balfour, of 'interfering in the tender process for a multimillion-rand catering contract in' the Department of Correctional Services. Mr. Bloem also reportedly said that the Minister had 'dictated who had to deal with the tender specifications.' Reported by Ndivhuho Mafela, 8 February 2009, The Times, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=934538> see also <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=931761>

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## PRISON GANGS

**Number of prison gang-related incidents down:** In its hand-over report, the out-going Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services said that 'over the last five years, there has been a major reduction in attempted escapes, escapes and gang-related incidents in South African prisons.' The Committee also reportedly added that 'gang-related incidents in prisons are down from 196 in 1996 to 12 in 2008, while attempted escapes are down from 23 in 2004 to 13 in 2008 and escapes from 176 in 2004 to 70 in 2008.' The National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Xoliswa Sibeko, welcomed the report saying that 'the successes were a result of improved security, strategic partnerships and the suspension of officials of the department that threatened or compromised security.' Reported by Nthambeleni Gabara, 20 February 2009, BuaNews, at <http://www.buanews.gov.za/news/09/09022011151003>

**DCS hosts roundtable on prison gangs in South Africa:** The Department of Correctional services hosted a roundtable discussion on 24 February 2009 in Pretoria to discuss prison gangs and strategic responses. Several NGOs, including CSPRI, participated in the roundtable meeting. The roundtable 'heard that about 2600 inmates belong to gangs constituting only 1.7 percent of about 160 000 inmates in Correctional facilities. The Department ... acknowledged that the levels of influence may be higher with some inmates concealing their membership, collusion or compliance [with] the problematic sub-culture.' The National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Xoliswa Sibeko, reportedly said that 'only an integrated and dynamic onslaught against gangs and all other forms of organised crime can ensure that we achieve our goal of safe custody for inmates and officials. Statement issued by Manelisi Wolela, 24 February 2009, at <http://forafrica.co.za/?p=1954>

**Correctional Services National Commissioner welcomes strategy to fight gangs in prisons:** Correctional Services National Commissioner, Xoliswa Sibeko, welcomed the draft strategy to address gangsterism in prisons. The strategy was presented during a round table discussion on Combating Gangsterism in Correctional Centres in Pretoria on 24 February 2009. The Commissioner reportedly said that the Draft Anti-Gangsterism Strategy is 'a crucial milestone towards closing the institutional, systemic and psychological gaps that have helped to sustain the influence of gangs in Correctional Centres.' The roundtable was attended by the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, advocacy organisations and academic institutions who shared views and solutions to gangsterism. Reported on 25 February 2009, BuaNews, at <http://www.buanews.gov.za/news/09/09022512151001>

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## SENTENCING AND PAROLE

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**Parolee in court over murder:** Mr. Freek Herandien, who was paroled after serving a sentence for rape, appeared before a magistrate on allegations that he murdered Isoda Hanekom of Kuils River. The body of the deceased was allegedly 'found in her garage with her hands and feet tied and with a black bag over her head.' Reported on 6 February 2009, Legal Brief, at <http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20090205143010457>

**Opposition party calls for hard labour in prison:** The African Christian Democratic Party, one of the opposition parties in South Africa, supports 'the death penalty for murderers and harsh punishment for violent crimes.' The party also reportedly 'wants bail to be denied for certain categories of crime and for hard labour to be introduced in prisons.' Reported by Caiphus Kgosana, 14 February 2009, IOL, at [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=6&art\\_id=vn20090214071705234C939803](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=6&art_id=vn20090214071705234C939803)

**18-year old receives 30 days in prison for shoplifting ear buds:** An 18-year old man from Mamelodi was sentenced to 30 days imprisonment or a fine of R300 for shoplifting a packet of ear buds from PEP Stores. As he did not have the money to pay for the fine he had to be admitted to prison. Reported by Daniel Maluleke on 26 February 2009, Beeld, at <http://152.111.1.88/argief/berigte/beeld/2009/02/26/B1/16/tdmpluisie.html>

**Good Samaritan pays fine for 18-year old:** In a fortunate turn of events for the 18-year old Mamelodi man convicted and sentenced to 30 days imprisonment for shoplifting a packet of ear buds, a woman working at an advocate's chamber paid his fine for him and he is expected to be released. Reported by Daniel Maluleke, 27 February 2009, Beeld <http://152.111.1.88/argief/berigte/beeld/2009/02/27/B1/5/tdmoorpluisies.html>

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## PRISON CONSTRUCTION

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**Juvenile offenders' detention facility completed to address overcrowding in prisons:** The Department of Public Works in North West Province 'completed a R26,7 million centre for young offenders in efforts to help alleviate the challenge of juvenile overcrowding in prisons.' The facility is known as Rustenburg Secure Care Centre and is situated in Boitekong. The construction of the facility followed the 2002 directive from the Cabinet to the Departments of Correctional Services and Social Development 'to expedite the process of ensuring that juveniles were kept in separate prisons or places of safety. This was after a South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) TV news exposé of corruption that was allegedly taking place at the Grootvlei Prison in Bloemfontein, Free State. The video footage showed among others, prison warders allegedly selling juveniles to older prisoners for sex.' Reported on 3 February 2009, For Africa, at <http://forafrica.co.za/?p=1204>

**Finance Minister allocates money for new prisons:** While delivering his budget speech, the Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, told the National Assembly that his Ministry allocated money to the Department of Correctional Services which will enable the construction of four prisons 'through public/private partnerships at Paarl, East London, Klerksdorp and Polokwane.' The Minister reportedly said that the new prisons 'will provide capacity for 12 000 inmates, reducing prison overcrowding.' He added that 'another R900m is allocated to the Department of Correctional Services to enable the department to change its shift system to reduce the amount of overtime worked.' Reported by I-Net Bridge, 11 February 2009, Fin24, at [http://www.fin24.com/articles/default/display\\_article.aspx?Nav=ns&ArticleID=1518-2384-2391\\_2468121](http://www.fin24.com/articles/default/display_article.aspx?Nav=ns&ArticleID=1518-2384-2391_2468121) see also [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=vn20090216055737680C931604](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20090216055737680C931604)

**Companies bid for tenders to construct prisons:** The Department of Correctional Services has shortlisted several companies who tendered their documents to secure the contracts for the construction of four private prisons in Paarl, Nigel, Klerksdorp and East London. The 'shortlisted consortia include the Umtya Nethunga consortium, consisting of Bosasa, listed constructions company Group Five, American corrections management firm MTC, Rainbow Construction and Motheo Construction' and 'the Ikhwezi Consortium (led by GSL Global that is currently operating the Bloemfontein facility), South African Custodial Services (which is operating the Louis Trichardt private prison) and Siza Bantu (led by the world's biggest catering and facilities management company Sodexho).' Reported by Adriaan Basson, 13 February 2009, Mail and Guardian, at <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-02-13-bosasa-guns-for-slice-of-private-prisons-tender>

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## UNSENTENCED PRISONERS

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**Former awaiting trial prisoner publishes books on her experience in prison:** Ms Julia Mashele, who spent over six years in Pretoria Central Correctional Services awaiting trial, published three books detailing her experience in prison and the consequences imprisonment had on her life and family. Ms Mashela said that she also found God in prison. Whenever she visits prisons she encourages inmates to be optimistic that one day they would be released. One of her books is currently being developed into a screenplay. Reported by Hanti Otto, 16 February 2009, IOL, at [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=139&art\\_id=vn20090216060035988C742015](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=139&art_id=vn20090216060035988C742015)

**Court heard that prisoner is detained in 'protection section':** The Pinetown regional magistrate court heard that bail applicant, Mr. Mathew Naidoo, who allegedly helped two siblings kill their parents, was being 'detained in the protection section of the Westville Prison, a special facility for inmates deemed vulnerable including police members, military and security guards.' Mr. Kubendran Naidoo from the Department of Correctional Services said that he knew that overcrowding is a problem in South Africa's prisons. Reported by Sharlene Packree, 18 February 2009, The Witness, at [http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global\[\\_id\]=19815](http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global[_id]=19815)

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## PRISONERS' RIGHTS

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**Prisoners go on hunger strike:** Several prisoners at Leeuwkop Maximum Prison, north of Johannesburg, went on hunger strike 'over the lack of proper nutrition for terminally ill inmates and toiletries.' The inmates were unhappy about being 'forced to provide their own toiletries and terminally ill prisoners were not served nutritious food, resulting in serious health setbacks.' However, the spokesperson for the Department of Correctional Services in Gauteng Province, Mr. Simphiwe Kondleka, reportedly said that 'the matter had been brought to their attention, but the hunger strike was not official as prisoners did not put their complaints on

paper.' Reported by Mziwandile Nkosi, 26 January 2009, IOL, at [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=vn20090126040540542C302399](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20090126040540542C302399)

**Court orders the Department of Correctional Services to release medical report of deceased prisoner:** The Pretoria High Court ordered the Department of Correctional Services to release the file of a prisoner, known as MM, to the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). TAC sought the report 'that may shed light on whether or not treatment delays are still costing lives in South African prisons.' In the ruling, the High Court reportedly 'condemned the Ministry of Correctional Services for withholding ... [the report] on an investigation into the death of an inmate, known only as MM, who died at the Westville Correctional Centre in ... Durban, in August 2006. It also instructs the ministry to hand over unedited copies of the report to TAC.' Reported on 2 February 2009, Plus News, at <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82701>

**Court told that awaiting trial prisoner died in prison:** Court officials told the Durban Magistrates Court that Mr. Christopher Sikhosana, a prisoner awaiting trial for intimidating a magistrate, had died of natural causes in Westville prison. Mr. Sikhosana was on trial for defeating the ends of justice when he threatened to kill the magistrate if he sentences his friend to imprisonment in the event of conviction for charges relating to possession of fire arms. Reported by Sapa, 11 February 2009, News24, at [http://www.news24.com/News24/South\\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\\_2467755,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2467755,00.html)

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## ELECTIONS 2009

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**Voter registration for prisoners start:** Voter registration among prisoners started on 2 February 2009 but CSPRI warned that it may have limited success as it was announced at very short notice. Originally scheduled for February 16 to 20, it was moved forward to the week of February 2 to 5. Lukas Muntingh, project coordinator of the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative, said 'since most prisoners kept their identity books at home, there might not be enough time for their families to travel and pass on the documents. . . By virtue of that they are effectively excluded because this was announced at such short notice.' Reported by Wilson Johwa, 3 February 2009, Business Day, <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/topstories.aspx?ID=BD4A931177>

**CSPRI emphasises prisoners' right to vote:** In order to ensure that prisoners in South Africa participate in the April 2009 general elections, 'the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) issued a statement reminding organizations and individuals working in prisons and correctional facilities to remind prisoners of their rights.' Mr. Lukas Muntingh, the Project Coordinator of CSPRI, reportedly said that 'whether they are awaiting trial or already convicted of the most heinous crime doesn't matter... All prisoners are encouraged to register and vote.' Reported by Michelle Smith, 5 February 2009, RT, at [http://www.russiatoday.com/Politics/2009-02-05/S.Africa\\_s\\_weird\\_voting\\_rules\\_explained.html](http://www.russiatoday.com/Politics/2009-02-05/S.Africa_s_weird_voting_rules_explained.html)

**Prisoners register to vote:** Electoral officials visited prisons throughout the country 'to register new voters, and those who wanted to update their details.' At Boksburg prison, for example, '538 of the 3540 prisoners registered' at the end of the prisoners' registration window. Some prisoners mobilized others to participate in the registration process. Mr Sydney van Wyk and Mr Bheki Sithole 'were praised for dedicating their time ... to mobilise other inmates to register.' Both inmates said that 'because of their love for their country, they found it important to visit other inmates, cell by cell, to encourage them to register with the IEC to be eligible to vote.' Reported by Liphert Chilwane, 6 February 2009, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/topstories.aspx?ID=BD4A933661>

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## REHABILITATION

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**Organisation rehabilitates prisoners:** A Strand resident, Ms Lesly Uys, established a non-profit organisation, Restorative Justice, which offers rehabilitation programmes in some South African prisons. The organisation is 'currently running 57 cell-groups within 15 different prisons' and its founder 'aims on expanding nationally with Krugersdorp her focus for 2009.' The organisation also recruits volunteers to help in rehabilitating offenders. Reported by Maryke Roberts, 7 February 2009, Helderberg (News24) at [http://www.news24.com/Regional\\_Papers/Components/Category\\_Article\\_Text\\_Template/0,2430,303-716-717\\_2464687~E,00.html](http://www.news24.com/Regional_Papers/Components/Category_Article_Text_Template/0,2430,303-716-717_2464687~E,00.html)

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## SECURITY AND ESCAPES

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**Prisoners believed to be affiliated to gangs stab warders:** The Western Cape Provincial spokesperson of the Department of Correctional Services, Mr. Ofentse Morwane, reportedly said that seven 'warders were stabbed by prisoners at the Brandvlei maximum security prison in Worcester in the Boland.' Mr. Morwane added that 'the attack happened ... when ten prisoners, believed to be affiliated to prison gangs, stabbed the warders in the prison yard.' The wounded warders received medical attention and were discharged from hospital. The Department was investigating the incident and the prisoners who stabbed the warders were transferred to other prisons. Reported by Sapa, 9 February 2009, News24, at [http://www.news24.com/News24/South\\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\\_2466962,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2466962,00.html) see also <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=935838>

**Awaiting trial prisoner describes prison conditions as 'appalling' and tells court of prison gang fights:** In his application for bail, Mr. Matthew Naidoo, who is accused of murder, told the Pinetown Regional Court in Durban that 'the conditions at Westville Prison were appalling and dangerous, and that he lived in constant fear.' Mr. Naidoo added that there was 'massive overcrowding' at the prison and that 'gang fights and stabbings are a regular occurrence.' He alleged that on 21 January 2009 three people were killed at the prison and that others were hospitalised. He also told the Court that his right to human dignity was being violated in the prison. He was also concerned that there were delays in investigating his case which could result into him spending close to two years in prison awaiting trial. Reported by Sapa, 3 February 2009, News24 at [http://www.news24.com/News24/South\\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\\_2463462,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2463462,00.html)

**Prisoner pleads guilty to escaping from prison:** Mr. Annanias Mathe, a Mozambican national who 'made headlines when he escaped from the Pretoria C-Max prison, regarded as the most secure in the country, in November 2006' while appearing before the Johannesburg High Court pleaded guilty to escaping from prison but pleaded not guilty 69 other counts. Reported by Sapa, 16 February 2009, News24 at [http://www.news24.com/News24/South\\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\\_2470873,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2470873,00.html) see also <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-02-16-mathe-admits-to-escapes-denies-other-charges>

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## OTHER

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**Correctional Services Department to lay compliant against lawyer for interviewing prisoner:** The Department of Correctional Services said that it was to lay a complaint with the Law Societies of South Africa and the Cape of Good Hope against an attorney, Mr. Shahied Schrueder, for interviewing a prisoner, Ms Najwa Petersen, who is serving a 28 year sentence at the Breede River women's prison. The Department said that Mr. Schrueder had applied for a 'legal visit' but it was 'clear from the media report that instead of consulting with the offender on a legal matter, the attorney facilitated a media enquiry.' Reported by Sapa, 19 February 2009, News24 at [http://www.news24.com/News24/South\\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\\_2472934,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2472934,00.html) see also [http://www.news24.com/News24/South\\_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442\\_2473087,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2473087,00.html)

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## OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

### Mauritius

**South African detainee hospitalised after prison warders' assault:** Ms Janette Nolvuyo Ntamo, a South African who has been awaiting trial for four years on drugs-related charges was reportedly assaulted by members of the Mauritian prison security squad at the Beau Bassin Women's Prison when she complained that she had been in prison for too long awaiting trial. Mauritian human rights lawyer, Jean Claude Bibi, said that he was 'informed by the South Africa embassy that it proposes to raise the matter at a very high level with the Mauritian government and ... the embassy was still discussing the matter with the South African authorities in Pretoria.' Mr. Bibi added that 'Mauritian and foreign prisoners alike ...are far too often unlawfully and grievously beaten by members of the prison security squad.' Reported by Lynnette Johns, 15 February 2009, IOL, at [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=126&art\\_id=vn20090215121842324C118402](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=126&art_id=vn20090215121842324C118402)

### Namibia

**Bill on prison reform to be tabled in Parliament:** While announcing the Draft Ministerial Strategic Plan for the next five years, the Minister of Safety and Security, Dr Nickey Lyambo, said that 'the Corrections and

Conditional Bill will be tabled in ... Parliament, which is a milestone to prison reform that will empower prison officials and community members to support and supervise the gradual controlled released offenders in their transition to social reintegration.' Dr. Lyambo added that the prison authorities would ensure that many prisoners participate in rehabilitation programmes to avoid recidivism. Reported by Catherine Sasman, 26 February 2009, New Era, at <http://www.newera.com.na/article.php?articleid=2658>

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

**Prison conditions life-threatening:** The United States State Department's global survey revealed that there are still gross human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and that torture and rape were still commonplace in the country. The report also alleged that 'life-threatening conditions persisted in prison facilities.' Reported by Reuters, 25 February 2009, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSN25492226>

### **The Gambia**

**Prisoner appears in court on new charges:** Mr. David Fulton, a Scottish national serving a one year prison sentence in The Gambia for sedition, appeared in court to face new charges of 'forgery and impersonating an officer.' He risked being sentenced to one and a half years' imprisonment on conviction. Prosecutors alleged that Mr. Fulton 'gave a false administration number with intent to defraud and falsely presented himself as a military officer by wearing a military uniform in 2007 and 2008.' Reported by Will Ross, 17 February 2009, BBC News, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7893881.stm>

### **Senegal**

**Human rights organisations call for the release of gay prisoners:** Two international human rights organisations, the Society for AIDS in Africa and the International AIDS Society, issued a statement in which they called upon the government of Senegal to release nine men who were sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for 'indecent conduct and unnatural acts.' The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission also condemned the sentences imposed saying that 'the extremity of this sentence and the rapidness of the trial all really shocks us in a country which has been moving so positively towards rule of law and a progressive human rights regime.' Reported by Liz Highleyman, 29 January 2009, The Bay Area Reported, at <http://www.ebar.com/news/article.php?sec=news&article=3679>

### **Malawi**

**NGOs call for speedy trial of human rights activists:** Over 80 NGOs called for the speedy trial of the 'detained Zimbabwean Human rights defender, Jestina Mukoko and her two colleagues who are accused of plotting to overthrow the government of President Robert Mugabe.' The Human Rights Consultative Committee, a network of 80 Malawian human rights organisations, said that the detained human rights activists 'have become the symbol of a suffering nation, a nation imprisoned by the devastating outcomes of a lack of responsible leadership and decision making.' Reported on 29 January 2009, Nyasa Times, at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/national/2553.html>

**Awaiting trial prisoner denied bail for being 'a threat to the community':** Mr. Geoffrey Mphaninga, who was answering five charges including assault, was denied bail by Principal Resident Magistrate at Kasungu, Kate Nthala, because he was 'a threat to the community.' The magistrate ordered that Mr. Mphaninga should be remanded at Maula Prison in Lilongwe. Reported on 31 January 2009, Nyasa Times, at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/national/2584.html>

**Former prisoners arrested for robbing police station:** Police arrested four former prisoners, Mr. Brian Mkandawire, Mr. Young Mkandawire, Mr. Marko Nyirenda and Mr. Austin Ngwira for breaking into Euthini Police in Mzimba and stealing riffles, 'two head gears, a solar panel and a button [sic] stick'. Reported by Judith Moyo, 3 February 2009, Nyasa Times, at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/national/2602.html>

### **Zimbabwe**

**Political prisoners allegedly tortured:** A Zimbabwean human rights lawyer reportedly said that political prisoners have been 'severely tortured to extract false confessions of terrorism.' The Guardian reported that it had seen doctors' affidavits which revealed 'a pattern of torture of many of the 30 political and human rights

activists held by the state for months. Nine of the prisoners seen by doctors were subjected to simulated drowning, being hung by their wrists in handcuffs and beaten, and high-voltage electric shocks.' The newspaper also reported that 'one man was hung upside down from a tree and dumped into a water-filled drum until he passed out. A 72-year-old man was held in a deep freeze before scalding water was poured on his genitals.' Reported by Chris McGreal, 10 February 2009, The Guardian, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/10/zimbabwe-mugabe-reneges-deal>

**Prime Minister calls for the immediate release of political prisoners:** Zimbabwe Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, said that 'he wanted political prisoners freed immediately.' On his first day in office, Mr. Tsvangirai visited Zimbabwe's maximum security prison and spent 45 minutes talking to the 16 political prisoners in that facility. Mr. Tsvangirai's spokesperson, Mr. Joseph Mungwari, said that 'no assurances of release were obtained during' the Prime Minister's visit. Mr. Mungwari added that the prisoners were not well. Reported by AP, 12 February 2009, News24, at [http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-1662\\_2469112,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-1662_2469112,00.html) see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200902100745.html> see also <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article5721388.ece>

**Prisoners allegedly starving:** Zimbabwean opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, called upon the government to release one of its senior members, Mr. Roy Bennett, and other human rights activists in detention. The opposition party also said that 'the conditions in the prison are so deplorable that one person in Roy Bennett's cell died' and the body was not removed immediately and that prisoners were 'literally starving to death.' Reported AP, 20 February 2009, News24 at [http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-1662\\_2473539,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-1662_2473539,00.html) see also [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jd\\_JZmhdw6XWCIfpenWt9g-dqNNAD96I1O281](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jd_JZmhdw6XWCIfpenWt9g-dqNNAD96I1O281)

**UN Secretary-General says that the release of political prisoners is 'desirable':** United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, reportedly urged the government of Zimbabwe to release political prisoners and said that he was concerned about the arrests and detentions. The Secretary General said that 'the releasing of political prisoners will be important and desirable.' Reported by John Heilprin, 26 February 2009, Associated Press, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iISAuDBvIGS88Y3UMtZTw2OzwwdW96IM2B00>

## Ethiopia

**Prisoner's sentence reduced:** The appeal court reduced Mr. Teddy Afro's six years' prison sentence for manslaughter to two years. Mr. Afro, Ethiopia's most famous pop star, 'was convicted in December last year of killing an 18-year-old homeless man while driving in the capital Addis Ababa in 2007.' In reducing the sentence, Judge Dagne Melaku of the appeal court held that Mr. Afro was guilty but that 'the victim had been drunk and was lying unconscious on the road when he was hit by the performer's car.' The judge also held that 'the police had failed to move the victim to a safer place.' The ruling means that Mr. Afro could be released from prison in less than 12 months. Reported by Reuters, 18 February 2009, IOL, at [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=68&art\\_id=nw20090218202406817C531777](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=68&art_id=nw20090218202406817C531777)

**Political parties call for the release of opposition leader:** Two political parties, the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces and the Unity for Democracy and Justice, formed an alliance and called on the government of Ethiopia to release Ms Birtukan Mideksa, the leader of Unity for Democracy and Justice. Ms Mideksa has been in solitary confinement since December 2008. The parties also demanded the release of several other prisoners although their names were not mentioned. Reported by Reuters 20 February 2009, News24 at [http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447\\_2473183,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_2473183,00.html) see also <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/jailed-ndash-judge-who-refused-to-say-sorry-1543645.html>

## Uganda

**Government wants terrorism suspects taken to court after three months:** The government wants the Constitution to be amended so that 'terrorism suspects and suspected high level criminals' are detained for three months before being produced to court. Currently, the Constitution requires that any suspect must be brought to court within 48 hours of his arrest. The Defence Minister, Dr Crispus Kiyonga, told the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee that the 48 hours' period was not 'practical' because 'the practical difficulty of interrogating suspects of serious crimes has led to the abuse of this law with much regret.' However, the 'Committee Chairperson, Steven Tashobya ... said the three months is a long period.' Reported by Mercy

Nalugo, 15 February 2009, Sunday Monitor, at [http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/sun\\_news/Govt\\_wants\\_suspects\\_held\\_for\\_3\\_months\\_79894.shtml](http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/sun_news/Govt_wants_suspects_held_for_3_months_79894.shtml)

**Pardoned death-row inmate asks President to pardon other prisoners:** Brig. Ali Fadul, who spent 22 years on death row, said that prison life was challenging because there was 'no peace, no freedom, no liberty. The guards just make whatever decisions they can think of and impose it on you.' Brig. Fadul thanked the President of Uganda for pardoning him but said that he also encouraged him 'to pardon and release many other inmates languishing in ... prison. Many are living there with ailments, frustrations, while others have their families suffering outside.' Reported by Solomon Muyita and Pauline Kairu, 16 February 2009, Sunday Monitor, at [http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/coffee-break/From\\_grace\\_to\\_grass12\\_80010.shtml](http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/coffee-break/From_grace_to_grass12_80010.shtml)

**Officials told to respect prisoners' rights:** The Assistant Commissioner of Prisons in Charge of Enterprises, Mr. David Nsalasata, cautioned prison officials against violating prisoners' rights. Mr. Nsalalata reportedly advised prison officials to handle prisoners 'in a humane manner. They are here for correction and reform and they should not be tortured or ill-treated. They can be better citizens if they are treated with care.' In a related incident, the government of Uganda is also constructing new prisons in the districts of Gulu, Apac, Mbarara, Nakasongola, Mpigi and Ntungamo. These prisons will accommodate 2000 inmates. Reported by Alex Ocen, 17 February 2009, The New Vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/16/671776>

**Organisations sponsor prisoners' education:** The Senior Welfare Officer and Headmaster of Inmates' School at Luzira Prison, Mr. John Kagambo, said that several inmates in the prison were taking part in formal education programmes and that some had performed exceptionally well in the national examinations. Mr. Kagambo added that 'Franciscan Prison Ministry in Kamwokya, AVSI, Italian Voluntary Organisation, Vision for Africa, a religious organisation and African Prisons Projects, a UK-based organisation are among the sponsors of inmates who wish to pursue further education.' Reported by Nyongesa Wandera, 18 February 2009, The Monitor, at [http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/features/Prison\\_graduates\\_80030.shtml](http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/features/Prison_graduates_80030.shtml)

**Uganda's largest prison to be reallocated:** Luzira prison, Uganda's largest prison, is to be relocated to another area so that the land it is occupying can be allocated to investors. The prison officials were reportedly preparing a proposal for Cabinet, which seeks to allow 'an investor shift the prison and take over the 460 acres of land.' The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabashaija, reportedly said that the proposal was an attempt to reduce overcrowding at the prison. Reported by Fortunate Ahimbisibwe, 18 February 2009, The New Vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/671906>

**Ugandan awaits trial for several years in Saudi Arabia:** A Ugandan national, Mr. Faheart Huling Oling, has reportedly been awaiting trial in a Saudi Arabian prison for four years although he has not been notified of the offences he is alleged to have committed. A source from the Ugandan Embassy in Saudi Arabia said that the Saudi Arabian government has on several occasions ignored all the diplomatic notes inquiring about Mr. Oling's status. Reported by Madinah Tebajjukira, 23 February 2009, The New Vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/12/672455>

**Prisoners protest overcrowding:** Inmates at in Kayunga district prisons wrote 'a protest letter to the central region community service coordinator, Kenneth Wadewa' complaining about overcrowding in prisons. Mr. Wandewa said that the conditions in prisons were 'pathetic' and suggested that 'magistrates should dispense more community service sentences to minor offenders to avoid crowding'. He said the project would reduce the prisons' administrative costs.' Prison warders also confirmed that overcrowding was a serious problem in the district. Reported by Charles Jjuuko, 23 February 2009, The New Vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/672463>

## Angola

**Minister says inmates should enjoy better living conditions:** While speaking in Luanda at the opening of the upgrading course for prison Directors from African Portuguese Speaking Community, the Angolan Interior Minister, Roberto Leal Monteiro 'Ngongo, said that 'there is urgent need for improvement to the management of prison services in the country, so inmates enjoy better living conditions.' The course was attended by prison directors from Angola and Mozambique and was 'part of the project of support to the development of the judiciary system, financed by the European Union and the Portuguese Cooperation.' Reported on 2 February 2009, Angola Press, at [http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/en\\_us/noticias/sociedade/Interior-minister-urges-for-improved-prison-services,591c4c18-cb3d-499c-b32b-6997decd83cc.html](http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/en_us/noticias/sociedade/Interior-minister-urges-for-improved-prison-services,591c4c18-cb3d-499c-b32b-6997decd83cc.html)

## Nigeria

**400 Nigerian prisoners to be repatriated from the UK:** During his visit to the Federal Ministry of Interior, the United Kingdom Minister of State for Immigration and Borders, Mr. Phil Woolas, said that, 'there were about 400 Nigerians in UK prisons waiting to be repatriated.' Mr. Woolas was in Nigeria to seek 'cooperation to facilitate and fast-track immigration policies between both countries.' The Nigerian Minister of Interior, Retired General Godwin Abbe, reportedly said that 'efforts were being made by the two countries to ensure that the prisoners were successfully returned to the country.' Reported on 4 February 2009, This Day, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200902040292.html>

**Comptroller-General highlights state of Nigerian prisons:** During an interview, the Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Prisons Service, Mr. Olusola Ogundipe, identified various achievements and challenges of the Nigeria Prisons Service. Mr. Ogundipe reportedly said that there was improved healthcare in prisons and that prisoners living with HIV/AIDS were on medication, that there was a need for state governments to assist in the management of federal prisons, and that prison overcrowding 'is as a result of inflow of human beings from outside to the prisons.' Mr. Ogundipe added that the police and the judiciary could both be blamed for prison overcrowding, and that prison warders are now proud of their job. Reported by Victor Ahiuma-Young, 21 February 2009, Vanguard, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200902230149.html>

**Several Nigerians in Israeli prisons awaiting deportation:** Nigeria's Ambassador to Israel, Mr. Olisa Dada, told journalists that 38 Nigerians were being detained in Israeli prisons awaiting deportation. Ambassador Dada added that 'most of the Nigerians were arrested while crossing the Israeli-Egyptian borders illegally, while others who came for some official and private visits overstayed their visits and few others who came for pilgrimage ended up absconding.' Reported by Golu Timothy, 24 February 2009, Leadership, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200902240653.html>

**Awaiting trial prisoners denied bail:** The Federal High Court in Benin, Edo State, rejected the bail application of seven prisoners awaiting trial for illegal oil bunkering and ordered that they should be remanded at the Benin prison. The seven suspects are, Mr. Opoku Anim, Mr. Ernest Anim, Mr. Wellington Adobah, Mr. Kwesi Eminsang, Mr. Seth Kpodisime, Mr. Abraham Yao Ahiador and Mr. Ochuko Omoreode. While 'vehemently' rejecting the accused's bail application, Justice Mohammed Idris, said that 'bail cannot be granted in a vacuum but must be based on merit and material facts which were lacking.' Reported on 26 February 2009, This Day, at <http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=136690>

## Eritrea

**Journalists' body demands to know medical condition of detainee:** The Committee to Protect Journalists issued a statement in which it said that the 'Eritrean authorities must disclose the medical condition and care being provided to jailed journalist Dawit Isaac.' The journalists' body said that it had received unofficial reports that Mr. Isaac had been hospitalised. Mr. Isaac has been in detention awaiting trial since September 2001. Reported on 5 February 2009, Committee to Protect Journalists, at <http://cpj.org/2009/02/long-held-in-secret-eritrean-jail-dawit-isaac-repo.php>

## Cameroon

**Rights body alleges that awaiting trial prisoners die in custody:** The international human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, released a report in which it alleged that there were various human rights violations in Cameroon. The report 'talks of extra-judicial killings carried out by government forces, many prison inmates waiting trial dying in custody, while others are killed by warders and forces of law and order.' However, Cameroon's Vice Prime Minister in Charge of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, Amadou Ali, dismissed Amnesty International's findings as baseless. Reported on 6 February 2009, TMC, at <http://www.tmcnet.com/submit/2009/02/06/3970819.htm>

**Former detainee says trafficking of contraband rife in prison:** Retired Colonel James Chi Ngafor, who spent two years awaiting trial in Kondengui Central Prison in Yaoundé, said that the prison is 'hell on earth' and unbelievably overcrowded. Retired Colonel Ngafor said there is 'trafficking of everything' in the prison. He added that there is 'trafficking of cocaine and marijuana. At times, it is done with the knowledge of the warders. There, you find homosexuality at its peak. Those that have money go to those that do not have anything and arrange sex deals with them. The money can be only FCFA 100. The inmates are fed only once

a day around 11 a.m. or midday and with nothing but palm full maize painted in palm oil.' Reported by Kini Nsom & Daniel Gwarbarah, 25 February 2009, The Post News, at <http://www.postnewsline.com/2009/02/kondengui-prison-is-hell-on-earth-col-chi-ngafor.html>

### Botswana

**Prison officials should be allowed to unionise:** Member of Parliament for Gaborone Central, Mr. Dumelang Saleshando, told Parliament that there was a need to amend the Trade Unions and Employers' Organisation Act and the Prisons Act to allow law enforcement officers, including members of the Botswana Prisons Service, to form and join unions. Mr. Saleshando said that prison officers 'could be allowed to unionise but denied the right to strike.' Reported by BOPA, 10 February 2009, BOPA Daily News, at [http://www.gov.bw/cgi-bin/news.cgi?d=20090210&i=Saleshando\\_calls\\_for\\_police\\_prisons\\_unionisation](http://www.gov.bw/cgi-bin/news.cgi?d=20090210&i=Saleshando_calls_for_police_prisons_unionisation)

### Guinea

**Prison conditions 'unacceptable', medical body:** Doctors Without Borders, an international medical body, reportedly said that the conditions under which prisoners were being detained in Guinea were 'unacceptable.' The medical body also reportedly added that the 'dire humanitarian needs' in the prisons demanded 'an immediate response' and that 'deprivation of food, water, minimal living conditions and other basic needs is life-threatening and tantamount to ill-treatment of prisoners.' Reported by on 24 February 2009, AFP, at [http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447\\_2475480,00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_2475480,00.html) see also <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hZ7jeYUU3iOB5ITe80Z6x2z8-3tQ>

### Ghana

**Prisoner released after successful appeal:** Mr. Thomas Tichler, who was in Ghana 'to work as a consultant for a micro finance project, helping deprived people develop business enterprises' but later convicted of assaulting a toddler and sentenced to four years' imprisonment, was acquitted on appeal. Mr. Tichler was reportedly being detained in 'appalling prison conditions.' Reported by Alexandra Barham, 24 February 2009, St. Albans and Harpenden Review, at [http://www.stalbansreview.co.uk/news/4150384.Voluntary\\_worker\\_s\\_fight\\_for\\_freedom\\_preavails/](http://www.stalbansreview.co.uk/news/4150384.Voluntary_worker_s_fight_for_freedom_preavails/)

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