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Court grants prisoner permission to attend father's funeral: Cape High Court Judge, Nathan Erasmus, granted permission to Najwa Petersen, who is awaiting-trial at Breede River Prison in Worcester for allegedly masterminding the murder of her husband, to attend her father's funeral service. Although the Provincial Director of Public Prosecutions had allowed Najwa's request to attend the funeral, the Department of Correctional Services objected, raising logistical issues which is why a High Court order had to be sought. Reported by Murray Williams and Zara Nicholson, 02 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071002150644722C733657 see also

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071003025113926C450012

Parolee commits murder: Sibusiso Vilikazi, a former South African Defence Force officer, who was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for the murder of a military officer, and released on parole after serving six years, murdered his fiancée and then turned the gun on himself. Judge Pete Combrinck, who was among the judges that sentenced him to 20 years imprisonment, reportedly said that he was shocked that he had been paroled that early. Reported by Sherlissa Peters, 3 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071003123213304C293083

Prisoner loses appeal to the Constitutional Court: Schabir Shaik, a Durban businessman who is serving a 15-year prison sentence at Durban-Westville Prison for fraud, lost his appeal to the Constitutional Court challenging his conviction and sentence. His family said that he bravely received the news of his unsuccessful appeal. http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071003025703677C955329 see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071003031147281C535857

Supreme Court of Appeal thinks life imprisonment not good for rehabilitation: The Supreme Court of Appeal ruled recently in the case of S v Nkomo that when there is hope that an offender could be rehabilitated, that should be considered as a substantial and compelling circumstance under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Such an offender should therefore not be sentenced to life imprisonment. This decision has been criticised in the media on the grounds that it assumes that some offenders are incapable of rehabilitation. Article by Serjeant, 2 October 2007, Mail and Guardian, at <http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx?articleid=320688>

Prisoner petitions High Court for release on medical parole: Sabelo Khumalo, a partially blind and paralysed 48-year old prisoner serving a 15-year prison sentence for armed robbery at Modderbee Prison in Benoni, wants the court to order the Parole Board to release him on medical parole. In his papers to the Pretoria High Court, the wheelchair-bound Khumalo said that he was being held in the medical section of the prison and he relies on the assistance of fellow inmates and nurses in the hospital section to bathe him, change his nappies and clothe him. He stated that he qualified for medical parole in terms of the provisions of the Correctional Services Act, but said the Parole Board, on two occasions, refused him parole. Khumalo wants the court to order the Parole Board to place him on medical parole. Reported by Zelda Venter, 9 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071009035400204C426869

Prisoners threaten to force President to pardon them: Janusz Walus and Clive Derby-Lewis, who unsuccessfully sought amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1999 for the 1993 assassination of the then head of the South African Communist Party, Chris Hani, and unsuccessfully applied for Presidential pardon five years ago, have now taken their pardon battle to court. Their lawyers said they would proceed with an application to the High Court asking it to order President Mbeki to make a decision on their application for a Presidential pardon. Reported by Sapa, 16 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20071016144544954C849946

Parole conditions to become more stringent: Mr. Dennis Bloem, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, said that prisoners serving sentences for murder will find it more difficult to be released on parole in future. He made this statement in the aftermath of the murder of South Africa reggae star Lucky Dube. Mr. Bloem reportedly assured the public that the Portfolio Committee 'is very serious about making life very, very difficult for this coward killers and rapists in our country.' Mr. Bloem added that the Committee had just passed an amendment to the Correctional Service Act 'that will make life very difficult for them (prisoners) inside.' Reported Sabcnews, 20 October 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,157797,00.html

Parole conditions tightened: Parliament adopted the Correctional Services Amendment Bill which will tighten parole conditions for dangerous offenders. Parole for such offenders will now be determined by the National Council on Correctional Services. The council will consist of judges, magistrates and Members of Parliament. Mr. Dennis Bloem, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, said that offenders serving life imprisonment should not expect to be considered for early parole. He said that tightening parole conditions 'will send a strong and clear message to criminals.' Reported by Sabcnews, 18 October 2007, at <http://www.sabcnews.co.za/politics/parliament/0,2172,157721,00.html>

Department concerned about increasing number of long term prisoners: Manelisi Wolela, the spokesperson for the Department of Correctional Services, said that they were concerned about the increasing number of prisoners serving lengthy prison terms. He said that this increase has 'resulted in the Department caring for more prisoners who occupy beds for longer.' He added that prisoners serving lengthy terms have 'increased security costs for the department and limited its rehabilitation interventions.' Reported by Ernest Mabuza, 22 October 2007, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A592552>

ESCAPES

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Prison escape case referred and postponed: Mr. Annanias Mathe, the Mozambican national charged with escaping from Pretoria's C-Max prison in 2006, while appearing before the Pretoria Magistrates Court heard that his case had been referred to the Johannesburg High Court. He was also told that the case had been postponed to 12 November 2007. Reported by Sapa, 6 October 2007, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4066764> see also

<http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=49767,1,22>

Prison escapees shot dead: Superintendent Mike Fatyela, of Mthatha Eastern Cape police, said that two of the prisoners who escaped from Wellington Prison in Mthatha in August this year were shot dead when they allegedly exchanged gunfire with the police as they attempted to hijack a police vehicle. Fatyela said that one of the prisoners died on the scene of the shooting and the other died in hospital. Reported by Sapa, 7 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20071007162959321C678025

Prisoners escape from police van: Fourteen illegal immigrants escaped from a Home Affairs van that broke down on its way to Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town. Police spokesperson, Sipokazi Mawisa, confirmed the immigrants were being transported to prison in a Home Affairs vehicle. Home Affairs said that the escapees were not hardened criminals but that they were being sent to prison so they could later be deported to their respective countries. Reported by Asa Sokopo, 12 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071012111301366C643081

Correctional Services in partnership to curb prison escapes: The Department of Correctional Services entered into a partnership with the Eastern Cape Legislature, Safety and Liaison Department and the Office of the Premier to curb the escape of prisoners. According to the Department, 45 prisoners escaped between May 2007 and October this year. Members of the newly-formed partnership vowed to ensure that there are no more escapes and that prisons in the country are run properly. During the launch of the partnership, the Minister of Correctional Services, Ngconde Balfour, appealed to communities and businesses to support ex-prisoners. Reported by Sabcnews, 16 October 2007, at

http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,157544,00.html

HUMAN RESOURCES

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Professor criticises Department for suspending a doctor: Professor Solly Benatar, of the University of Cape Town, criticised the Department of Correctional Services for suspending Dr. Paul Theron despite the Department's lack of a sufficient number of health professionals. Dr. Theron was suspended in September this year when he reported the appalling state of health services at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town. Professor Benatar argued that in the light of the increasing number of natural deaths in South Africa's prisons, the Department should have made more efforts to improve the health conditions in prisons and reward those medical personnel who worked tirelessly instead of dismissing them when they report to the oversight bodies about the poor health conditions in prisons. Professor Benatar's Opinion, 4

October 2007, Cape Times, at <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4063350>

Union concerned over the exodus of prison staff: Glisson Itebogeng, Northern Cape Provincial Secretary of Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru), said that the rate at which staff were leaving the Department of Correctional Services in the Province was alarming. He said that the Department 'has 12 prisons in the province with a capacity of between 400 and 800 (staff) per institution and the prisons are all over 100 percent full.' He added that union members felt overcrowding hampered the rehabilitation of prisoners and compromised health and safety standards. He added that many social workers, educators and other professionals had resigned from the Department. Reported by Sapa, 10 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20071010181607750C442983

Department of Correctional Services promotes women: The Department of Correctional Services said that two women, Tozama Mqobi and Grace Molatedi were appointed to executive management positions. Mqobi was appointed as Gauteng Regional Commissioner, and Molatedi to the Pretoria Management Area Commissioner. The two promotions brought women's representation at Deputy Director-General level in the Department to 45%. Reported by Sapa, 10 October 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=584057>

Prison warders threatened to strike over delayed overtime payment: Prison warders were threatening to abandon their posts and cause 'huge-scale chaos', if the Department of Correctional Services failed to pay them for overtime work. Since July this year, the Department had not paid the warders for working during weekends. However, the Department met the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) for talks on how they could avert the strike. Reported by Wendy Jasson da Costa, 17 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071017063129634C447844 see also http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=322257&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/

PRISON CONDITIONS

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Prisons have problems with keeping high number of prisoners: Msisi Dladla, head of Pietermaritzburg New Prison, told the High Court that prison officials have a hard time coping up with the high numbers of inmates awaiting trial. Dladla was summoned to court by Judge Gregory Kruger to explain why one of the three inmates accused of attempted murder, robbery and rape was not in court. Dladla said that they deal with more than 1 300 awaiting-trial inmates, with approximately 500 of them attending court every day. He said that this was too much work for them, which resulted in mistakes being made. It was also noted by the Court that some prisoners had visible wounds. They told the Court that they had

been assaulted by the warders. The court ordered that they should be taken for treatment. Reported by Sherlissa Peters, 10 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20071010090731451C741663 see also <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=50161,1,22>

Former inmate refers to Durban-Westville prison as hell: A former prisoner, Neil Crosthwaite, who spent three years at Durban-Westville prison on corruption charges said that if he had to go back to that prison, he would commit suicide. He added that he 'spent three years in hell' and does not 'want to go through it again.' Crosthwaite explained that Durban-Westville Prison is known as one of the hardest prisons in the country. He added that while in prison, 'he saw one man killed and another "sliced apart" with razor blades for R10.' That at Westville, gangs and drugs are the order of the day and the only way to survive was to be aggressive. Reported by Barbara Cole, 17 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20071017131642514C488043 see also <http://www.themercury.co.za/?fSectionId=&fArticleId=vn20071017131642514C488043>

Prison a danger to society and prisoners: The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services described the Johannesburg prison as a ticking time bomb. The Committee said that it discovered that the structure of the Johannesburg prison was posing a danger not only to society but to the prisoners themselves. However, the Department of Correctional Services spokesperson, Manelisi Wolela, reportedly expressed disappointment at concerns raised by the Committee. Reported by Sabcnews, 16 October 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,157575,00.html

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Prisoner attempts to kill himself: Senzo Gqems Ncubeni, a convicted murderer in detention at Pietermaritzburg New Prison, cut his genitals with a pair of scissors. Ncubeni said he wanted to kill himself because he had personal problems. The Department of Correctional Services confirmed the incident. Ncubeni was sent to hospital for treatment. Reported by Mercury Reporter, 12 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071012041334870C861118

REHABILITATION

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Prison unveils vegetable processing plant: Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town unveiled a vegetable processing plant run by parolees and inmates. The project is aimed at providing skills to inmates that will help them find work once they return to society. The project started in 2005 as a small-scale initiative of the Department of Correctional Services and Bosasa, a private catering company, to grow and process vegetables for the prison. Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, officially unveiled the project building, which is next to the prison's 16-hectare piece of land on which various vegetables are cultivated. Since its beginning, the project has developed into a substantial processing plant, supplying 50 tons of vegetables to the prison kitchen, with any extras and porridge leftovers being donated to a school in nearby Khayelitsha and an educare centre in nearby Vrygrond. The National Commissioner, Vernie Petersen, said the project was 'a way of ensuring that citizens got value for the billions of rand in tax money they spent on Correctional Services, because it would help rehabilitate offenders who have to be reintegrated into society.' Reported by Karen Breytenbach, 22 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071022033806487C689973

Prisoners condemn the murder of music star: In a petition signed by nearly 100 inmates of a prison near Pretoria, prisoners serving sentences for violent crimes condemned Lucky Dube's killing. The prisoners reportedly said that though they are serving sentences for violent crimes, they felt they had wronged their nation and there is no justification for such barbaric acts. The inmates said that by decrying such acts, they were apologising to the communities they had wronged and that their apology showed that they had changed. Reported by Sapa, 26 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20071026121138262C323727

Researcher says Correctional Services should also fight crime: Johan Burger, a researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), in his article published in the ISS's SA Crime Quarterly said that the Department on Correctional Services and other government representatives 'need to tell the public what they are doing to address crime and the social conditions which lead to crime.' He added that in order for South Africa to effectively fight crime, there is a need for various strategies to be adopted including a 'prison system that could accommodate those who receive prison sentences and keep them imprisoned.' Reported by Natasha Joseph, 23 October 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20071023044439864C918297

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Movie shot in prison: South African-born movie star, Alice Krige, was in Cape Town for the making of a film at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town. Inmates got the chance to work alongside British actors such as Sir Derek Jacobi, Richard Clifford, veteran South African actor John Kani, Warren Adler and Bo Petersen. Krige said they presented their project to the Department of Correctional Services and it was very well

received. The actors hope to set up a foundation where they will run workshops and training programmes at the prison. They said that 'working with prisoners was exhilarating.' Reported by Helen Bamford, 14 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071014084701740C502521

Movie about prison corruption in the pipeline: A multimillion-rand movie, based on a book written by an ex-prisoner, Gayton McKenzie, who exposed corrupt prison warders at Bloemfontein's Grootvlei Prison, will be shot in Cape Town early next year. McKenzie said that the film will sketch how he led one of the biggest prison exposés in the world; how he caught warders on film supplying drugs and alcohol to inmates, pimping young inmates to older prisoners, and even the giving to prisoners of a loaded pistol to use in an escape. Reported Thabiso Thakali, 13 October 2007, IOL,

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20071013081651874C499162

Inmates observe Corrections Week: Inmates at Boksburg Prison's juvenile centre in Gauteng participated in celebrating Corrections Week. Prisoners performed drama sketches highlighting the importance of the correction of inmates, as well as music and gumboot dances. Tozama Mqobi, Correctional Services' Regional Commissioner of Gauteng, said the aim of the Corrections Week was to create awareness of the Department's role to socially transform and develop inmates. Reported by Langelihle Chagwe, 16 October 2007, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=587889>

Other African countries

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Algeria

Human Rights Committee concerned about treatment of prisoners: The Human Rights Committee considered Algeria's third periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and raised several human rights concerns including the treatment of prisoners in Algeria's prisons and the issue of the death penalty. The Algerian delegation informed the Committee that no prisoner had been executed since 1993 and that complaints against state officials alleging the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners were always investigated by the relevant authorities. The delegation also denied the existence of secret detention facilities and informed the Committee that delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross were allowed to make unannounced visits to prisons. Press Release by Reliefweb, 24 October 2007, at

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/KH11-78B3HB?OpenDocument>

Mali

Country to abolish the death penalty: The government of Mali said it was planning to abolish the death penalty, three decades after it carried out the last execution. In a statement issued by the government, it stated that a cabinet meeting approved a bill which 'stipulated that the death penalty be abolished and... replaced by life imprisonment.' Reported by IOL, 18 October 2007, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20071018141836926C537790

Sudan

Court refuses to release political prisoners: Sudan's Court of Appeal refused a request to release 25 awaiting-trial political opposition figures accused of plotting to overthrow the government. The 25 prisoners were arrested in July this year. National Security accused them of conspiring to overthrow the government, but no charges have been laid against any of them since their arrest. Their family members said that their interrogations, which involved various methods of torture, ended in August. Reported by Opheera McDoom, 7 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20071007151820328C649689

Rwanda

Senate Commission concerned about poor prison conditions: A Senate commission expressed serious concerns over the state of Rwandan prisons, and advised the line ministry to do everything possible to improve the standards. Senator Valens Munyabagisha, the President of the Commission, said that the prisons were overcrowded, dilapidated, and had leaking roofs. He said that another serious problem was the inappropriate salary scale for prison warders which was very low and not in conformity with current living costs. However, the Minister of Internal Security, Sheik Musa Fazil Harerimana, explained that many prisons, such as Kigali Central Prison, are in the process of being relocated, and therefore it was not necessary to undertake costly renovations of such prisons. Reported by New Times, 14 October 2007, at

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=1318&article=1607> also see

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=1321&article=1667>

Genocide prisoners do community work: Community service for Genocide prisoners was officially launched in Rwesero cell, Bukure sector late in late October. The prisoners, 196 men and 4 women, dug terraces along Lake Muhazi to prevent soil erosion. Gicumbi district is one of the five districts in the Northern Province to officially launch community work for Genocide prisoners. In his address to the prisoners, National Executive Secretary for Community Work, Eng. Evariste Bizimana, called upon prisoners to work willingly and complete their sentences. Reported by Ambrose Gahene, New Time, 13

October 2007, New Times, at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=1316&article=1586>

International Criminal Tribunal's prosecutor tours prison: The Prosecutor General of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Bubacar Jallow, was impressed by the new holding cells built for Genocide suspects who are soon to be transferred to Rwanda. The new holding cells were built at Kigali Central Prison. They are expected to be used for temporary detention of Genocide suspects who will be transferred from the Arusha-based ICTR, or those extradited from different countries. The rooms are equipped with a television set each, a library and washrooms for the inmates. Inside the cells' compound is a recreation centre for the inmates to do some sports. Reported by Edwin Musoni, 18 October 2007, New Times,

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=1321&article=1679>

Malawi

Prisoner allegedly assaulted to death in custody: The Malawi police confirmed that a 54-year-old prisoner, Vickson Kossam, died while in custody in Dedza district, central Malawi, a few days after his conviction. Kossam died while in his cell due allegedly after being assaulted by fellow prisoners. Kossam was serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of court. Reported by Judith Moyo, 4 October 2007, Nyasa Times, at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/index.php?news=1387>

Uganda

Prisoners stay on remand for years: Half of the 729 prisoners at Kigo prison, one of Uganda's maximum security prisons, have not appeared in court for the last five years. The prisoners asked Members of Parliament, who visited the prison, to ask the Parliamentary Internal Affairs Committee to come to their rescue. However, the Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabashajja, defended the prisons institution, saying they were not responsible for determining who should report to court and when. Reported by Apollo Mubiru, 3 October 2007, The New Vision, at

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/590051>

Prison commissioned: A New prison that will accommodate over 600 inmates, was commissioned in the Nakasongola district. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, the Minister of Internal Affairs, officiated at the opening of the USD 1.12 Million prison located near Nakasongola town in Central Uganda. The prison has several wards, a large dining hall, flush toilets, shower rooms and recreation areas. The prison was built by Bosco Muwonge, a businessman in exchange for a prime plot of land in Kampala, the capital, which housed a Remand Home. Dr. Johnson Byabashajja, the Commissioner General of Prisons, said that 'the people we keep in our facilities are human beings. The conditions under which they live should be humane. I wish I could have all my facilities like this.' However, the residents shunned the opening of the prison. District leaders said the locals feared to attend because of the stigma associated with prisons. Reported by Charles Ariko, 7 October 2007, The New Vision, at

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/590690>

Tanzania

Inmates protest: 40 inmates being detained at the Arusha-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) protested against the request by the Tribunal to transfer some of the inmates to Rwanda to stand trial in that country. The move is meant to ensure that the Tribunal finalises all the cases by December 2008 when it is suppose to close down. In their letter to the Tribunal, the inmates asked the President and judges of the Tribunal to confirm the independence of the Tribunal by refusing any transfer to Rwanda. They suggested that the Tribunal's President should ask the Security Council to prolong its mandate or to transfer some of the non-completed trials to courts in countries other than Rwanda should the Tribunal fail to try them within the scheduled time. Reported by Daily News reporter, 10 October 2007, Daily News, at

<http://www.dailynews-tsn.com/page.php?id=8996> see also

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20071009122026645C486934

Remand prisoners attempt to boycott court sessions: Police in Dar-es-Salaam prevented an attempt by remand prisoners from Keko Prison to boycott court sessions in protest for what they claimed was government's failure to solve their problems. The police held four alleged ring leaders who were said to have masterminded the plan. The prisoners alleged that promises made by four ministers who visited them in March this year to solve their problems, including de-congestions in cells and expediting the hearing of their cases, had not been fulfilled. Reported by Faustine Kapama, 3 October 2007, Daily News, at <http://www.dailynews-tsn.com/page.php?id=8920>

Remand prisoners charged with masterminding aborted boycott: Four remand prisoners, who allegedly incited the aborted boycott of court sessions, appeared before the Kisutu Resident Magistrate's Court in Dar-es-Salaam and charged with obstructing the police from executing their duty. According to the prosecution, the accused prevented 12 remand prisoners of the Temeke District Court to disembark the vehicle, by closing the door and forcefully held it while uttering threatening words. The prosecution alleged further that, while uttering those words, the accused threatened fellow remand prisoners that they would assault any one who would come out of the vehicle, an act which prevented them from appearing in court on time. Reported by Faustine Kapama, 5 October 2007, Daily News, at

<http://www.dailynews-tsn.com/page.php?id=8954>

Remand prisoners blame Director of Public Prosecution for delaying their cases: While appearing before the Magistrate, eight murder suspects accused the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) of delaying the disposal of their case by 'sitting' on the police file for about two months since it was sent to his office contrary to his promise. According to the suspects, when the DPP visited them in prison, he promised to handle their cases timely but that this was not what he was doing. They asked the court to intervene and take necessary measures against the prosecution to ensure that justice is done. However, the prosecution asked the court to ignore the suspects' claims. The magistrate agreed with the prosecution, saying the court has no duty to watch what the DPP was doing. She advised the accused to follow administrative

channels if they had any complaint against the DPP. Reported by Faustine Kapama, 12 October 2007, Daily News, at

<http://www.dailynews-tsn.com/page.php?id=9028>

Ghana

Judicial Service worried about poor prison conditions: The Judicial Service of Ghana is worried about serious congestion and overcrowding in prisons throughout the country. It said that there are serious human and social problems that need urgent attention by stakeholders in the criminal justice system. It noted that although facilities at the 20 prisons in Ghana can house only 8 004, there were actually 13,685 people in prison at the end of September. There have reportedly been persistent complaints about poor conditions in prisons, including congestion, poor food and health problems. It noted that some prisoners have been on remand for more than 8 years and one suspect had spent 10 years awaiting-trial. Reported by Panapress, 6 October 2007, at <http://www.afriquenligne.fr/news/daily-news/ghana-judicial-service-complains-about-prison-congestion-2007100610110/>

UN Agency trains prison officials: More than 50 prison officers in Ghana attended a two-week intensive non-formal education course aimed at building their capacity to improve social re-integration of inmates. The course is part of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) four-year sponsorship package to strengthen human rights institutions and promote access to justice in Ghana. Shigeki Komatsubara, the Deputy Resident Representative of the UNDP in Ghana, said that the workshop was also aimed at capacity building of the officers to respect the human rights of prisoners. Prison officers who attended the course were also expected to educate inmates on their constitutional rights. Reported by BuaNews, 15 October 2007, at <http://www.buanews.gov.za/view.php?ID=07101513451003&coll=buanew07> see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710150602.html>

Prisoners to be trained: The Ghana Prisons Service (GPS) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is undertaking a four-year project that would ensure that prisoners can acquire basic education whilst in prison. The inmates, after studying subjects including Ghanaian languages based on Ghana Education Service's curriculum, would be issued with a Junior High School (JHS) Certificate as part of their rehabilitation. Ms Chantal Ruel, UNDP Programme officer, said the project is expected to start by the end of 2007 and preparatory works are far advanced for a successful takeoff. Reported by Isaac Essel, Accra Mail, 17 October 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710170490.html>

NGO calls for prisons reform: Mr. Kwaku Owusu, the Chairperson of Mmobrowa Foundation, a Kumasi-based NGO, expressed concern over the state of prisons in Ghana and recommended that regulations governing Ghana prisons should be reviewed. Mr. Owusu said that overcrowding in prisons was a serious problem and called on the government to grant bail to awaiting-trial prisoners on charges, such as rape, if investigations are not completed within six months. He suggested that new prisons should be built to accommodate the increasing number of criminals and that the government should remunerate prison warders properly to enable them to perform their duties effectively. He cautioned that overcrowding in prisons facilitated the spread of diseases. Reported by Sebastian R. Freiku, 9 October 2007, The Ghanaian

Chronicle, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710090896.html>

Bar Association wants old prison closed down: At the closure of its annual conference, the Ghana Bar Association passed a resolution in which it expressed its readiness to pressure the government to immediately close down and relocate inmates of the country's ageing James Fort Prison in the capital Accra. Bar members said that the prison had to be closed down because it was seriously dilapidated and posed a great danger to both the inmates and officers. They suggested the speedy completion of the Ankaful Prison Complex in the Central Region as one of the interventions for the relocation exercise. Members of the Bar also decried overcrowding in prisons, the poor conditions under which prisoners were living and also under which prisons officers were working. Reported by S. Makalo, 18 October 2007, *afrol News*, at <http://www.afrol.com/articles/26969>

Nigeria

350 recruited for prisons jobs: 350 youths were recruited for prison jobs and are now undergoing training at the Prisons Training College, Kirikiri. Addressing the recruits at the training school, the Commandant of the Prisons, Mr. Ebenezer Abayomi Oguntunase, said that five hundred students were shortlisted for the course but due to logistical problems not all of them were able to attend. He also advised the trainees to adhere to the rules and regulations of the school. Reported by Frederick Okopie, 26 September 2007, *Vanguard*, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709260275.html>

Governor visits prisons: Abia State Governor, Theodore Orji, visited Kirikiri Medium Security Prisons in line with his pledge to the prison community. The Deputy Controller of Prison, Mr. Hussain Mohammed, welcomed the Governor to the prison and appealed to him to help in alleviating the poor conditions in prisons. The Governor donated an ambulance to the prison to transport ill prisoners to hospital. The Governor also donated N300, 000 for the release of prisoners who could not afford to pay small amounts of court fines. The Governor called upon the Federal government to be committed to reforms to change the deplorable prison conditions. Reported by Charles Kumolu, 2 October 2007, *Vanguard*, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710020222.html>

Judge blames prison officials: Justice Joseph Oyewole of Ikeja High Court slammed the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) for its consistent failure to produce accused persons in court. The judge expressed his displeasure when NPS officials failed to produce three awaiting-trial prisoners accused of defrauding a foreigner. He described it as an act of justice by the NPS to produce prisoners to court. The prisoners' lawyer, Akin Atanda, prayed to the court to ensure that accused persons in custody were not denied their fundamental human rights. Reported by Leadership, 4 October 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710040309.html>

Angola

Prisoners died attempting to escape: The Angolan Home Affairs Ministry said that two prisoners died and six were injured, including a prison guard, while attempting to escape from the Central Luanda prison. The Ministry added that prisoners used axes, machetes, and metal pipes to take the guards hostage in their attempted escape. However, witnesses claimed that 20 people were killed after the prisoners snatched guns from their guards and fought with police reinforcements. Reported by Sapa-AP, 3 October 2007, The Mercury, at

<http://www.themercury.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4062256> see also

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200710020978.html>

Mozambique

Officers suspended for smuggling sex workers into prison: Five policemen who were working at the Maputo maximum security prison, were suspended for smuggling prostitutes into the prison. However, the Prison Director, Fortunato Matangala, declined to give the names of those suspended. He said they were the commander of the police unit, an officer on duty, a driver, and two prison guards. The suspended officers used to recruit the sex workers from Maputo streets and brought them to the prisoners at night using prison vehicles. The activity has allegedly been going on for years. Reported by Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique, 27 September 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709271014.html>

Zimbabwe

Prison officer arrested for stealing prison maize: Masiwa Chandengenda, a Zimbabwe Prison Service officer based in Bindura, was arrested and charged for allegedly stealing six tonnes of maize belonging to his employer. He allegedly misrepresented to a Zimbabwe Prison Service clerk, Ms Mandioma, that the Gokwe Prison was in need of six tonnes of maize to feed prisoners and instructed her to dispatch the grain. He also allegedly instructed the clerk to forge the date of dispatch as September 22, on the pretext he would travel to Gokwe that day. He was arrested while ferrying the maize to another place for his own use. When the Gokwe prison officer in charge was contacted, he denied having requested the maize from the Bindura Prison. The six tonnes of maize were recovered. Reported in the Herald, 6 October 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710080417.html>

Democratic Republic of Congo

Four die in attempted prison escape: The Congolese police said that three law enforcement agents and a prisoner were killed during an aborted prison escape from a high-security prison in Katanga Province, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Police said that the deceased were killed during gunfire exchanged between the prisoners and soldiers who had been deployed to restore order at the prison. Five other people, two policemen, one soldier and two prisoners, were injured during the clashes. Reported by Sapa-Ap, 16 October 2007, IOL, at

http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20071016181245855C598135

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