

In this Issue:

[GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION](#)
[UNSENTENCED PRISONERS](#)
[PAROLE AND SENTENCING](#)
[PRISON CONDITIONS](#)
[OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES](#)

[Top of the page](#)

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

Plans to build prefabricated prisons: IOL reported that the Minister of Correctional Services has informed parliament of the Department's plans to build "high-rise" or "prefab" detention facilities. This will reportedly save on the "enormous cost of brick-and-mortar prisons." Reported by Deon de Lange, 1 September 2011, at <http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/plan-for-prefab-prisons-1.1129642>

Sexual harassment "prevalent" in the Department of Correctional Services: Times Live reported that the National Commissioner for Correctional Services had told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that the "abuse of power in his Department, which often took a sexual form, was prevalent." The chairperson of the Committee reportedly stated that he received phone calls almost every day from female prison officials complaining that they were being sexually harassed by their bosses. Reported by Thabo Mokone, 8 September 2011, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2011/09/08/prisons-bosses-are-often-sex-pests>

Court reinstates dismissed officials: Times Live reported that a court ordered that the Department of Correctional Services reinstate five of its officials. The Department had dismissed the officials four years ago for wearing their hair in dreadlocks and refusing to cut them off when ordered to. Reported by Times Live, 28 September 2011, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2011/09/28/rastas-on-high-after-verdict>

[Top of the page](#)

UNSENTENCED PRISONERS

Case backlog in courts: Times Live reported that the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, in a recent statement, has said that it was responding to the problem of case backlog in the courts as best it could. The report stated that one million cases per year went through the courts and that there is a backlog of 38014 cases. Reported by Prega Govender, 18 September, 2011, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2011/09/18/we-re-doing-our-best-to-cut-the-backlog>

"Bail should be affordable": Times Live reported that the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services has tabled a report on remand detention before Parliament in which it calls for the law to be changed in order for it to be compulsory for magistrates to consider the affordability of the bail amounts they set. Reported by Anna Majavu, 22 September 2011, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2011/09/22/bail-should-be-affordable-says-correctional-services-committee>

PAROLE AND SENTENCING

Prisoners granted "permission" to apply for parole: IOL reported that the Department of Correctional Services, in response to a court decision handed down in July 2011, has given prisoners sentenced before October 2004 permission to request parole. Sonwabo Mbananga, spokesperson for the Department of Correctional Services was quoted as saying that prisoners would need to have served a minimum of 13 years and four months in order to be considered for parole. Reported by Amrita Naidoo, 5 September 2011, at <http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/opinion/child-killer-eligible-for-parole-1.1130948>

Parole given to prisoners sentenced pre-1994: The Business Day reported that 40 prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment prior to 1994 have been granted parole by the Department of Correctional Services. Those released will reportedly be part of the Department's electronic tagging pilot project. Reported by Business Day, 6 September 2011, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=152649>

New opportunity for parolees: BuaNews reported that the Department of Correctional Services and Helen Joseph Hospital have signed a memorandum of understanding giving effect to a project in which parolees will be assisting the hospital as part of the completion of their sentences. Reported by BuaNews, 7 September 2011, at <http://www.buanews.gov.za/news/11/11090715551002>

PRISON CONDITIONS

Rape rampant in prisons: The New Age reported that incidences in which male prisoners are raped by other male prisoners are rampant as well as under-reported. The article also referred to a UNODC report released in 2010 which reveals that there is a high risk of HIV transmission between prisoners and the general population because the majority of prisoners eventually leave and return to society. Reported by Zinhle Mapumulo, 6 September 2011, at http://www.thenewage.co.za/blogdetail.aspx?mid=186&blog_id=%201213

Cameras may be installed in prison cells: News24 reported that the Department of Correctional Services is considering installing spy cameras in prison cells as part of efforts to combat sex related abuse and assaults amongst prisoners. Reported by News24, 7 September 2011, at <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Spy-cameras-for-prison-cells-20110907>

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

ANGOLA

Plans to build more facilities: allAfrica.com reported that the Angolan Minister of Home Affairs had announced plans for the construction and reconstruction of six prison facilities. According to the Minister, the additional capacity will reduce overcrowding, which is currently at 21%. Reported by allAfrica.com, 9 September 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109110015.html>

Higher education for prisoners: allAfrica.com reported that the Minister of the Interior had announced that "higher education" programmes in prisons will be implemented in the next two years in order to facilitate access to academic and professional training. Reported by allAfrica.com, 10 September 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109100226.html>

Activists imprisoned: Reuters reported that 17 activists had been sentenced to prison, some for up to three months, for their involvement in an anti-government rally. The report said that Human Rights Watch and opposition political groups had called for the unconditional release of the prisoners. Reported by Reuters, 13 September 2011, at <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJJOE78C01320110913>

CAMEROON

Services come at a price in Kondengui Prison: Jade Cameroun reported that prisoners in Kondengui Prison have access to some services, but only if they can afford to pay for them. The library charges an annual membership fee of CAF 5000, and food and health care is extremely limited for those who cannot pay for it themselves. This reportedly renders most prisoners in no condition to undertake any physical or intellectual activity. Original report in French. Reported by Léger Ntiga, 21 September 2011, at

<http://www.jadecameroun.com/news.php?detailAct=202>

Poor prisoners not given adequate visiting space: Jade Cameroun reported that at New Bell Prison in Douala, prisoners who pay prison officials get to stay in better cells and make use of a separate visiting facility. Those who cannot pay are forced to stand in the cramped courtyard and shout in order to communicate with their visitors. Original report in French. Reported by Blaise Djouokep, 21 September 2011, at <http://www.jadecameroun.com/news.php?detailAct=203>

Prisoners victims of sexual violence: Jade Cameroun reported that certain prisoners at New Bell Prison in Douala force others into sexual relations through manipulation, threat or violence. Original report in French. Reported by Théodore Tchopa, 21 September 2011, at <http://www.jadecameroun.com/news.php?detailAct=204>

Detainees denied right to vote: Jade Cameroun reported that awaiting trial detainees are being denied their right to vote. Awaiting trial detainees have complained about this issue, as have human rights organisations, stating that this right should not be infringed until they have been proven guilty. Prison and judicial authorities maintain that it is impossible to allow them to vote. Original report in French. Reported by Guy Modeste Dzudie, 28 September 2011, at <http://www.jadecameroun.com/news.php?detailAct=205>

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

967 prisoners escape: The Guardian reported that two prisoners were killed when eight armed men attacked prison guards in an attempt to free a "militant" prisoner reportedly sentenced to death. During the attempt, 967 prisoners escaped, 152 of which were reportedly recaptured shortly thereafter. Reported by the Guardian, 7 September 2011, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/07/congo-jailbreak-967-prisoners-escape?INTCMP=SRCH>

MONUSCO requests that prison security be improved: Radio Okapi reported that a mixed delegation of MONUSCO and Government officials have requested that security in prisons in the Equateur Province be improved. They also requested that the training of prison staff (including female and military guards) be enhanced and that the Provincial Parliament setup a sub-committee to deal specifically with prisons. Original report in French. Reported by Radio Okapi, 13 September 2011, at <http://radiookapi.net/en-bref/2011/09/13/equateur-le-gouvernement-et-la-monusco-plaident-pour-la-securisation-des-prisons/>

Provincial Parliament discusses prison conditions in North Kivu: Radio Okapi reported that overcrowding and malnutrition were mentioned by parliamentarians and civil society as key reasons for uprisings in prisons in the North-Kivu Province, particularly in Kangbaya prison. During a debate with the Provincial Minister of Justice, provincial parliamentarians asked for a monthly subvention to support the prisons in dealing with these issues and increase public security. Original report in French. Reported by Radio Okapi, 14 September 2011, at <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2011/09/14/les-conditions-carcerales-difficiles-au-nord-kivu-debattues-a-l%E2%80%99assemblee-provinciale/>

Prisoners escape: The Washington Post reported that 114 prisoners had escaped from a prison in Tshikapa. The escape reportedly took place whilst an ill prisoner was being escorted to hospital. Prisoners had reportedly complained previously about there being a lack of food in the prison and the consequent death of two prisoners. Reported by the Washington Post, 26 September 2011, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/more-than-100-prisoners-in-congo-escape-jail-in-countrys-2nd-prison-break-this-month/2011/09/26/gIQA7A8byK_story.html

Minister of Justice accuses provinces of neglecting prisons: Radio Okapi reported that the State Minister of Justice, Luzolo Bambi, has deplored the numerous escapes from prisons. He reportedly said that the provinces were responsible for these escapes and that he had written to provincial authorities instructing them to improve the management of the provincial prisons. Original report in French. Reported by Radio Okapi, 28 September 2011, at <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2011/09/28/rdc-evasions-dans-les-prisons-luzolo-bambi-incrimine-les-gouverneurs-de-province/> (A radio interview with the Minister can be found through the following link: <http://radiookapi.net/emissions-audio/linvite-du-jour/2011/09/28/evasions-dans-les-prisons-de-la-rdc-luzolo-bambi-accuse-les-gouverneurs-de-province/#more-103290>)

Interview on psychological torture: Radio Okapi featured a radio interview with independent jurist, Guylain Malhere, regarding whether Congolese law the psychological torture of prisoners. The Radio Okapi interview of 29 September 2011 is available (only in French) at <http://radiookapi.net/nationale/2011/09/29/torture-morale-quelles-sont-les-sanctions-prevue-par-la-loi-congolaise/>

27 cases of diarrhoea at Uvira Central Prison: Radio Okapi reported that 27 detainees were suffering from diarrhoea at Uvira Central Prison. Two weeks earlier there were reportedly 60 such cases. The cause of these outbreaks is reportedly poor sanitation, overcrowding, and lack of clean water. Original report in French. Reported by Radio Okapi, 30 September 2011, at <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2011/09/30/sud-kivu-27-cas-de-diarrhee-la-prison-centrale-duvira/#more-103785>

EGYPT

Military trials to come to an end: IOL reported that plans are underway for Egypt's army to discontinue the trying of civilians in military courts. The report added that the country's "decades-old emergency law would be scrapped as part of wider reforms to appease activists who have tried to build momentum for a mass protest against military trials." Reported by IOL, 6 September 2011, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/egypt-to-end-military-trials-of-civilians-1.1131719>

Thousands arrested: Arabian Business reported that Egypt's new military regime has arrested approximately 12 000 civilians since 28 January 2011. The number of those arrested and detained is said to be more than the total number detained during former president Hosni Mubarak's entire 30-year rule. Reported by Shane McGinley, 11 September 2011, at <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/12-000-arrested-in-egypt-since-january-human-rights-watch-says-419845.html>

Authorities urged to release prisoner: almasryalyoum.com reported that Amnesty International has urged Egypt's military rulers to release detained blogger, Maikel Nabil Sanad, who has reportedly been on a hunger strike for over a month. Reported by Ahmed Zaki Osman, 26 September 2011, at <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/499732>

ERITREA

Calls for the release of prisoners: Defence Web reported that Amnesty International and the European Parliament had called on the authorities in Eritrea to release eleven former Eritrean officials and a journalist who have been in held incommunicado since a government crack-down in 2001. Reported by Defence Web, 19 September 2011, at http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19172:amnesty-calls-for-release-of-eritrea-officials&catid=54:Governance&Itemid=118

GHANA

Prison short on water: myjoyonline.com reported that Nsawam Medium Security Prison, which accommodates 3300 prisoners, is experiencing an acute water shortage. The report said that three of the four boreholes meant to supplement the supply of water in the prison were malfunctioning. "Water boys" (prisoners who pump water in the prison yard) are reportedly taking financial advantage of the situation by selling what little remaining water there is to prisoners. Reported by myjoyonline.com, 27 September 2011, at <http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201109/73622.php>

KENYA

New Attorney General to look into the plight of remand prisoners: The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation reported that the incoming Attorney General, Professor Githu Muigai, has undertaken to reduce the period of time spent by suspects in remand prison. Responding to questions posed to him in parliament, he reportedly stated that it was "regrettable that suspects continue to spend years in remand in disregard of the law." Reported by Nelly Moraa, 6 September 2011, at <http://www.kbc.co.ke/news.asp?nid=72330>

Prisoners attempt to escape from prison: menafin.com reported that five prisoners from Kamiti prison were arrested when seen scaling the prison fence in an attempt to escape. Reported by menafin.com, 21 September 2011, at http://www.menafin.com/qn_news_story.asp?storyid={83f3afd1-e7b7-4a6d-b017-e688c2d294f3}

LIBERIA

Prison facilities in a poor state: myjoyonline.com reported that Amnesty International had condemned the state of prison facilities in Liberia which are reportedly "so poor that they violate basic human rights." Prisoners are reportedly in overcrowded, dirty cells without adequate food, water or healthcare. Reported by myjoyonline.com, 20 September 2011, at <http://opinion.myjoyonline.com/pages/feature/201109/73278.php>

LIBYA

Arbitrary detention of prisoners: Voice of America reported that human rights groups has called on the Libyan National Transitional Council to stop what it said were "the arbitrary arrests and abuse" of African migrant workers and black Libyans assumed to be mercenaries "solely due to their dark skin colour". Reported by VOA News, 4 September 2011, at <http://blogs.voanews.com/breaking-news/2011/09/04/hrw-to-libya-stop-arbitrary-arrests-of-black-africans/>

Foreigners tortured in Libya: News 24 reported that human rights group, Defence of Foreigners in Libya, has accused Libya's new regime of imprisoning and torturing foreigners who are suspected of backing ousted Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Reported by News24, 14 September 2011, at http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Libya_immigrants_imprisoned_tortured_20110914

MOZAMBIQUE

Prisoner beaten to death: allAfrica.com reported that a prisoner has been accused of beating two other prisoners to death at the Quinta do Girassol detention centre. Reported by allAfrica.com, 28 September 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109280210.html>

NAMIBIA

Judge orders probe: allAfrica.com reported that Acting Judge Heathcote has ordered an investigation into the diet of prisoners at Windhoek Central Prison. The investigation follows a court application lodged by three prisoners who want prison authorities to provide them with the full diet which they claimed dieticians had prescribed for them. In addition, the prisoners want the court to allow them to buy food not supplied by the prison. Reported by allAfrica.com, 8 September 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109080590.html>

NIGERIA

Prisoner transfers under discussion: The Nation on Line reported that parliament may be promulgating legislation facilitating the mutual exchange of prisoners between the United Kingdom and Nigeria. There are reportedly about 16 400 Nigerians in UK prisons. Reported by Olukayode Thomas, 4 September 2011, at <http://www.thenationonlineng.net/2011/index.php/news/18329-prisoners%E2%80%99-swapping-controversy.html>

Suspects face death penalty: IOL reported that four men accused of organising a suicide bombing at United Nations headquarters in Nigeria run the risk of being sentenced to death if convicted. Reported by Bashir Adigun, 16 September 2011, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/nigeria-blast-accused-may-face-death-1.1139362>

RWANDA

Death penalty criticised: allAfrica.com reported that Rwanda's principal state attorney, Frank Mwine Mugisha, has described the death penalty as a horrible punishment that should not be applied in any African society that values human rights. The report added that Rwanda had abolished the death penalty in 2008. Reported by All Africa.com, 4 September 2011, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109051715.html>

SENEGAL

Remand detainee exchange: Africare View reported that Senegal and Mali have agreed to a prisoner exchange involving a total of 169 detainees. Senegal will give up 17 prisoners in exchange for the 152 that it will receive from Mali. Some detainees have reportedly been detained for as long as long as one year without trial. Reported by Tamba Jean-Matthew, 9 September 2011, at <http://www.africareview.com/News/-/979180/1232994/-/h6t82iz/-/>

SIERRA

Paralegals and the criminal justice system: Sierra Express Media published a story on the impact of paralegals in rural Sierra Leone. The article mentions that paralegals are playing a "key role" in the criminal justice system by helping to relieve the immense pressure on the country's detention facilities. Reported by Sonkita Conteh, 17 September 2011, at <http://www.sierraexpressmedia.com/archives/29621>.

LEONE

SOMALIA

Existence of detention base denied: The BBC reported that Somalia had dismissed reports that the US runs an underground detention centre in which the CIA allegedly interrogates terror suspects. Reported by the BBC, 9 September 2011, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14850581>

SUDAN

Refugees detained without trial: Radio Dabanga reported that two refugees from camps in North Darfur have been detained for more than two years without trial. They were reportedly arrested for having spoken publicly about human rights violations committed against refugees. Reported by El Fahser, 22 September 2011, at <http://www.radiodabanga.org/node/18903>.

SWAZILAND

Correctional Services can help resuscitate economy: The Observer reported that the National Commissioner for Correctional Services stated at the International Swaziland Trade Fair that the Department of Correctional Services could play a meaningful role in reviving the country's economy through income generating activities. Reported by Winile Masinga, 8 September 2011, at <http://www.observer.org.sz/index.php?news=29503>

TOGO

Allegations of torture: News24 reported that several suspects in Togo have told a court that they were tortured by the country's state security agency whilst in detention on charges in connection with a 2009 coup attempt. Reported by News24, 8 September 2011, at <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Togo-coup-suspects-claim-torture-20110907>

UGANDA

Luzira prisoners complain of overcrowding: The Uganda Pulse reported that prisoners have complained about overcrowding and the poor health conditions at Luzira prison. The prison's cells are reportedly accommodating four times than that for which they were designed. Reported by Uganda Pulse, 5 September 2011, at <http://www.ugpulse.com/uganda-news/people/luzira-inmates-complain-over-overcrowding/21462.aspx>

Land bought for purpose of building new prison: The New Vision reported that the Government had secured 300 acres of land on which they intend to set up a multi-functional prison for suspects accused of terrorism, drug trafficking and cyber-crimes. Reported by Petride Mudoola, 21 September 2011, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/765727>

ZAMBIA

Prison facilities in Zambia overcrowded: The Times reported that the National Parole Board of Zambia has identified overcrowding as a major challenge facing the prison system in Zambia. The report laments the spread of viral diseases such as tuberculosis, but adds that the parole system is increasingly being considered as a viable option to solve the problem of overcrowding. Reported by Andrew Lungu, 12 September 2011, at http://www.times.co.zm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1723:national-parole-board-to-address-prisons-congestion-&catid=68:others&Itemid=113

ZIMBABWE

Price of maintaining prisons revealed: The Herald reported that it costs government US\$1.7 million per month to feed the 14 000 prisoners at the 68 prisons in Zimbabwe. Reported by Daniel Nemukuyu, The Herald, 1 September 2011, at http://www.herald.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20019:prisoners-gobble-us17m-monthly&catid=37:top-stories&Itemid=130

Pledges to revamp prison system: News Day reported that President Robert Mugabe has pledged to revamp the prison system and ensure that offenders convicted of non-serious offences would be spared from having to share prison cells with "hard-core" criminals. The President also spoke of the possibility of introducing an open prison system for all local female offenders. Reported by Veneranda Langa, 7 September 2011, at <http://www.newsday.co.zw/article/2011-09-07-introduce-open-prison-system-for-females>

No food for suspects: The Herald reported that police stations around the country are, due to insufficient funding, failing to provide food to detained suspects. The report quotes Police Deputy Chief Spokesmen, Oliver Mandipaka, as saying that suspects are forced to rely on relatives and friends to bring them food. Reported by Daniel Nemukuyu, 8 September 2011, at http://www.herald.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=20707:no-food-for-suspects-say-police&catid=37:top-stories&Itemid=130

Overcrowding reduced: The Herald reported that the Zimbabwe Prison Service had in the past six months managed to reduce overcrowding in prisons by 4 000 prisoners. The report quotes Zimbabwe Prison Service Deputy Commissioner as saying that there are now 14 000 prisoners in the country's prisons against a holding capacity of 17 000. Reported by the Herald, 20 September 2011, at http://www.herald.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21645:zps-reduces-overcrowding-by-4-000&catid=46:crime-a-courts&Itemid=138

Activists tortured: The New Zimbabwe reported that ten MDC youths allege that they were tortured while in police detention. The activists were facing charges of throwing party leaflets into the grounds of the Bulawayo State House. Reported by Lindie Whiz, 20 September 2011, at <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-6099-MDC-10-tortured-at-State-House/news.aspx>

Advocacy group files court application: The Zimbabwean reported that human rights group, Women of Zimbabwe Arise, have filed a court application in which they petition the court to order authorities to improve the conditions for prisoners at Harare Central Police Station remand cells. Reported by Zimbabwean, 25 September 2011, at http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/human-rights/53123/woza-seeks-closure-of-police.html?utm_source=thezim&utm_medium=homepage&utm_campaign=listarticle&utm_content=headinglink

Government committed to supporting prisons: The Herald reported that the Commissioner for the Public Service Commission, Ms Tendai Bare, has stated that the Government is committed to supporting prisons in their bid to rehabilitate offenders. The Commissioner made the remarks at the second edition of the Africa Prisons Day organised by the Zimbabwe Prison Services at Gwanzura Stadium. Reported by the Herald, 27 September 2011, at http://www.herald.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22201:govt-committed-to-supporting-prisons&catid=46:crime-a-courts&Itemid=138

Earning money whilst serving sentences: The Zimbabwean reported that prisoners are encouraged by the Zimbabwe Prison Service to work and earn money whilst in prison. The report stated that many prisoners were working at private farms and other organisations while serving their sentences. This initiative is reportedly part of the Service's plan to rehabilitate offenders. Reported by the Zimbabwean, 28 September 2011, at <http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/news/zimbabwe/53171/prisoners-encouraged-to-work-earn.html>

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