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PRISON CONDITIONS

Prison population highest in Africa: The SABC reported that the Minister of Correctional Services bemoaned the fact that South Africa is "currently ranked number one in Africa and ninth in the world in terms of prison population." The statement was reportedly made at an awards ceremony on 1 March 2013. The Minister also noted that every month 23 000 inmates exit prisons and 25 000 are admitted. Reported by The SABC, 2 March 2013, at <http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/817158004ebd2ff0bffd2fb7074a8d3f/SAs-high-prison-population-ranked-first-in-Africa-20130203> also reported at <http://www.dieburger.com/Suid-Afrika/Nuus/SA-in-wereld-se-top-10-met-tronkvoels-20130303>

New mother and baby unit at Johannesburg prison: The BBC reported that the Department of Correctional Services has built a new mother and baby unit at Johannesburg Prison. The unit reportedly greatly improves the conditions in which mothers will be able to bond with their children. Reported by Nomsa Maseko, 6 March 2013, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21681824>

Disabled detainee receives assistance: The Mail and Guardian reported that soon after the plight of a disabled detainee was brought to light in the media, he received offers of assistance and was provided with a wheelchair by a non-government organization. He was also reportedly moved to the hospital section of the prison in which he is being detained and given medication. The detainee is disabled from the waist down and was forced to drag himself around on crutches without the use of a wheelchair. Reported by Carolyn Raphaely, 8 March 2013, at <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-03-08-paraplegics-hellish-ordeal-in-grootvlei-prison> also reported at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/08/south-africa-disability-prison>

TB screening in prison: Sowetan Live reported that inmates entering correctional services facilities will "in future be screened for tuberculosis (TB)." The Minister of Health, who reportedly handed over "state of the art" TB detection machines, stated that prisons have been identified as places where TB is prevalent. The report also noted that when it comes to TB, South African prisons are among the worst affected on the continent. Reported by Sowetan Live, 25 March 2013, at <http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2013/03/25/tb-screening-in-prison>

SENTENCING AND PAROLE

Non-custodial sentences and parole: The Mail and Guardian reported that the Minister of Correctional Services said in a statement that there are 48 323 offenders out on parole and 14 917 offenders serving non-custodial sentences. He reportedly called on the public to help "integrate paroled and released offenders into society as law-abiding citizens." The report notes that measures in place to ensure that

released offenders comply with their parole conditions include house detention, performance of community service and participating in treatment, development and support programmes. Reported by The Mail and Guardian, 10 March 2013, at <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-03-10-63-240-criminals-doing-time-outside-prison>

CORRUPTION AND GOVERNANCE

Auditor-General reports on use of consultants: Business Day Live reported that the results of a review by the Auditor-General on the Department of Correctional Service's use of consultants were presented to Parliament on 6 March 2013. The report notes that the Department spent more than R2 billion on consultants over a three-year period and "millions were spent" without the Department having tendered for such services. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 6 March 2013, at <http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2013/03/06/auditor-general-uncovers-litany-of-irregularities-at-correctional-services> A press release from the Department of Correctional Services responding to the Auditor-General's report is available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201303131410.html>

REHABILITATION

Compulsory education for inmates: Die Burger reported that the Minister of Correctional Services announced that from 1 April 2013 all inmates without qualifications higher than grade nine would receive compulsory education in prison. The matric pass rate for prisoners at the end of 2012 was reportedly 79%, an 11% increase since 2011. Reported by Die Burger, 4 March 2013, at <http://www.dieburger.com/SuidAfrika/Nuus/Alle-gevangenes-sal-verdere-onderrig-kry-20130304> (original report in Afrikaans).

Rehabilitation explained to community: Business Day Live reported that a Department of Correctional Services official explained to community members that interaction and dialogue between offenders and victims would hopefully become a "normal part of rehabilitation in the correctional services system" as it was intended to "ensure [the offenders'] ease of reintegration into society after they had served their sentences." These statements were made during a "victim-offender dialogue series" in Daveyton, Benoni, an initiative that commenced during 2012 and is "aimed at reducing the rate of repeat offences." Reported by Khulekani Magubane, 7 March 2013, at <http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/law/2013/03/07/department-hopes-victim-offender-dialogues-will-reduce-repeat-offences>

Reduction in 'backlog' cases: The Citizen reported that the Minister of Justice stated that the number of 'backlog cases' had been reduced significantly during the third quarter of 2012. Regional and district courts had reportedly removed 17 425 cases from the backlog court rolls between April and December 2012. This reportedly amounted to a 1.2 per cent reduction in the number of backlog cases on the court rolls. Reported by The Citizen, 24 February 2013, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/citizen/content/en/citizen/local-news?oid=395922&sn=Detail&pid=334&Drop-in-backlog-court-cases---Radebe>

OTHER

National Corrections Excellence Awards: allAfrica reported that the fifth National Corrections Excellence Awards were held on 1 March 2013 in Polokwane, Limpopo. The Minister of Correctional Services saw fit to award the prestigious Education and Training Award to Ms Helen Leseyane, an official who began her career at the Department of Correctional Services in 2002. She stated that she enjoys being an educator despite the fact that many inmates "are not interested in learning" and that she was motivated to assist the inmates in equipping themselves with skills so that they are able to make a living once released from prison. Reported by Mohlatlego Moitsi, 4 March 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201303040496.html>

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

ALGERIA

Seminar on protection of vulnerable prisoners: Liberté Algérie reported on a two-day seminar that took place to raise awareness on the role that civil society organisations can play in developing programmes for vulnerable categories of prisoners, such as women, the elderly or the mentally disabled. The seminar also highlighted the need for rehabilitation and reintegration to be developed in the Algerian prison system. Original report in French. Report by Hafida Ameyar, 28 February 2013, at <http://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/les-associations-ont-un-role-de-garants-des-droits-des-detenus-protection-des-categories-vulnerables-dans-les-prisons-195246>

ANGOLA

New prison nearly completed in Uige province: Angop reported that a new prison, able to accommodate 650 inmates is near completion. The new prison will reportedly alleviate the overcrowded conditions in Uige province. Currently, 963 individuals are imprisoned in Congo prison. The number of spaces available is unknown. Original report in French. Report by Angop, 13 March 2013, at http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/fr_fr/noticias/politica/2013/2/12/Plus-900-personnes-detenu-es-dans-prison-Uige-douze-mois,b079c82d-5903-4d7f-a930-cdae56975f51.html

CAMEROON

Riots at Bafoussam prison: Camer reported that following the alleged death of an inmate after a refusal by the head of the prison to transfer that prisoner to hospital, several inmates threatened prison officials with sticks and other prohibited objects. Original report in French. Report by Joseph Samuel Zoé, 4 March 2013, at <http://www.camer.be/index1.php?art=24894&rub=11:1>

DEMOCRATIC

REPUBLIC

OF

CONGO

Prison deaths on the increase: NECN.com reported that according to a report by the United Nation's human rights office, the number of Congolese prisoners who died in the country's jails nearly doubled in 2012 due to poor conditions, corruption and torture. The report notes that 101 prisoners died in 2012, 56 in 2011 and 54 in 2010 and that since 2010, 24 people died as a result of torture or ill treatment. Reported by NECN.com, 11 March 2013, at http://www.necn.com/03/13/13/UN-Congo-prison-deaths-double-in-2012/landing_nation.html?&apID=bd298bbc7ff7453eac9450bc27bceba2 also reported at www.iol.co.za/news/africa/congo-prisoners-dying-from-hunger-torture-1.1485955#.UU7Jthlk7Ms

MONUSCO raises awareness on HIV/Aids at Makala prison: Radio Okapi reported that MONUSCO conducted an awareness-raising campaign on the transmission of HIV/Aids and the development of the disease at the women's section of Makala prison, in Kinshasa. Most women took part in the voluntary testing opportunity. No such campaign had been conducted during the previous two years. Original report in French. Report by Radio Okapi, 13 March 2013, at <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2013/03/13/kinshasa-la-monusco-sensibilise-les-femmes-detenu-es-de-la-prison-de-makala-sur-le-sida/>

KENYA

Prisoners pardoned: The Standard reported that two prisoners at Naivasha prison have been pardoned of their sentences after having been named as among the "best candidates in the 2012 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education." Both prisoners were reportedly serving sentences of five years of imprisonment respectively after having been convicted of attempted robbery. They had both served four years. Reported by Antony Gitonga, 25 March 2013, at http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?articleID=2000080135&story_title=Kenya-Kenya:%20Prisoners%20who%20topped%20KCSE%20freed

MALI

Torture allegations: Human Rights Watch authored and posted an article arguing that the government of Mali should investigate allegations that Malian soldiers tortured seven suspected supporters of Islamist armed groups in Léré, near Timbuktu. The seven men all reportedly show visible signs of torture and allege that they were beaten and kicked, burned, injected with a caustic substance, and threatened with death while in army custody. Reported by Human Rights Watch, 26 March 2013, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/26/mali-soldiers-torture-detainees-lerere>

NIGERIA

Prisoners escape during prison raid: IOL News reported that armed men claiming to be members of the radical Islamic group Boko Haram attacked a prison and released 120 prisoners. The raid occurred one week after the group released a video in which they stated that they would not free a kidnapped French family unless Nigeria released all Boko Haram members from prison. Reported by IOL News, 24 March 2013, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/gunmen-free-inmates-from-prison-1.1490890#.UV2t4RIMY3k>

SENEGAL

Community work could replace custodial sentences: Renwi.com recommended that Senegal, faced

with an increase in convictions and an already overcrowded prison system, could introduce non-custodial sentences into its legislative framework. This will reportedly alleviate overcrowded conditions and reduce the amount of money the state is spending on prison upkeep. Original report in French. Report by Renwi.com, 1 March 2013, at http://www.rewmi.com/Surpopulation-dans-les-prisons-au-Senegal-Pourquoi-pas-l-application-des-peines-a-domicile_a75019.html

SUDAN

Judiciary defends sentences directing amputations: allAfrica.com reported that the Deputy Chief Justice stated that judges may receive special training on performing amputation on convicts should doctors refuse to carry them out. Despite the "strong rebuke and condemnation from several human rights groups" regarding sentences directing amputation, the judiciary has defended such sentences as they "are part of Islamic Shar'ia law." Reported by allAfrica.com, 11 March 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201303120283.html?viewall=1>

TUNISIA

Ministers of Justice and Human Rights visit Nadhour prison: Tunisie Numérique reported that on 23 March, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Human Rights and Transitional Justice visited Nadhour prison, in Bizerte. They reportedly witnessed the inhumane conditions of detention and the difficult living conditions of prison warders, and verified the health status of prisoners. The Minister of Justice reminded prisoners that they could apply, under certain conditions, for presidential pardon. Original report in French. Report by LM, 23 March 2013, at <http://www.tunisienumerique.com/tunisie-dilou-et-ben-ammou-visitent-la-prison-de-nadhour/170477>

UGANDA

Ugandans detained in Zimbabwean prisons: allAfrica.com reported that many Ugandans are being detained in Zimbabwean prisons in dire conditions. They are reportedly arrested on their way to South Africa for failing to provide the correct travel documents and are forced to remain in prison beyond the expiry of their respective sentences as there is no Ugandan embassy in Zimbabwe to deal with their deportation back to Uganda. Reported by Sadab Kittata, 22 March 2013, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201303220294.html>

Calls for release of detained Ugandans: New Zimbabwe reported that human rights activists have appealed to the International Human Rights Commission to "intervene and compel the Zimbabwe and South African governments to release and deport Ugandans held in prisons in the two countries. The report quotes the Director of Uganda's Human Rights Defenders as saying that "many Ugandans are being held in prisons without going to trial in the two countries." Reported by New Zimbabwe, 23 March 2013, at <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-10685-Group+wants+Ugandan+prisoners+released/news.aspx>

ZIMBABWE

Human rights lawyer denied bail: BBC News reported that a court refused bail to "prominent human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa" on the grounds that she is a flight risk. Mtetwa was arrested on 17 March 2013, after the referendum on a new constitution that "strengthens civil liberties," when she intervened in a police raid on the offices of the MDC in Harare. She has been charged with obstructing justice. Reported by BBC News, 20 March 2013, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21864596> This story is also discussed in a blogpost, available at <http://www.osisa.org/law/blog/why-beatrice-still-behind-bars>

Mtetwa granted bail: Aljazeera reported that a High Court has ordered the release of the prominent human rights lawyer, Beatrice Mtetwa, on 25 March 2012, thereby overturning the lower court that had refused bail. Mtetwa had been arrested when she had criticized police officers conducting a search at the home of one of Prime Minister Tsvangerai's affiliates a week earlier. Reported by Aljazeera, 25 March 2013, at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/03/201332584521697498.html>

Foreign detainees unable to return to countries of origin: New Zimbabwe reported that hundreds of foreign prisoners remain detained in the country's prisons despite having served their sentences. This is reportedly a result of the fact that the government of Zimbabwe is unable to pay for their transport back to their countries of origin. Reported by Deutsche Welle, 22 March 2013, at <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-10638-No+money+to+deport+foreign+ex-convicts/news.aspx> Also reported at <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-5-000-Ugandans-languishing-in-Zim--South-Africa-prisons-/-/688334/1730270/-/7wwgaiz/-/index.html>



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