

In this Issue:

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

SAFE CUSTODY AND TORTURE

HEALTH CARE

UNSENTENCED PRISONERS

PAROLE AND SENTENCING

PRISON CONSTRUCTION

ESCAPES AND SECURITY

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

[Top of Page](#)

Police officer allegedly tampered with Yengeni's blood sample: Former Goodwood police station Commissioner, Siphiso Hewana, who was dismissed for allegedly tampering with Toni Yengeni's blood sample when the latter was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol, challenged the hearing that resulted in his dismissal on the grounds that it was flawed. Mr. Hewana allegedly tampered with Mr. Toni Yengeni's blood sample, which was needed to verify whether the latter had been indeed been driving under the influence of alcohol. Yengeni, the former ANC Chief Whip, was on parole for fraud when he was arrested for alleged drunken driving. Reported by Andisiwe Makinana, 27 March 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080327122450207C388517

President authorises investigation of corruption in the Department: President Thabo Mbeki signed a proclamation authorising a probe into the contracts signed by the Department of Correctional Services worth over R 2 billion since January 2000. The President's intervention reportedly followed findings of wrongdoing that were revealed when the Special Investigating Unit conducted a forensic audit on the Department of Correctional Services' procurement practices in 2007. The investigation will focus on tenders awarded for repair and maintenance projects, IT contracts, supply of nutrition, supply of clothing, building and security in correctional centres, and agriculture and workshops. Reported by Mpumelelo Mkhabela, 29 March 2008, The Times, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/PrintEdition/News/Article.aspx?id=736365>

Zimbabweans allegedly died in South Africa prisons: A Zimbabwean journalist living in South Africa, Mr. Admore Tshuma, alleged in his newspaper report that 'many Zimbabweans are rotting in maximum prisons such as Sun City' and 'many have died in those prisons without informing their relatives back in Zimbabwe.' Mr. Tshuma added that 'recently, a Bulawayo man and former member of Zimbabwe National Army, Dumisani Ndimande, died at Sun City prison.' Opinion by Admore Tshuma, 1 April 2008, The Zimbabwean, at

http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11887:a-shameful-life-of-zimbabweans-in-johannesburg&catid=3:zimbabweans-permitted-to-take-limpopo-jobs&Itemid=61

Only police policies specifically prohibit torture, CSPRI: Mr. Lukas Muntingh of Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) told participants at a seminar on torture organised by CSPRI and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) that the South African Constitution prohibits torture but that only the police's policies refer to torture expressly and that 'all other policies are devoid of the language' of the UN Convention against Torture. Commissioner Leon Wessels of South Africa Human Rights Commission said that the government should meet its international obligation by criminalising torture. Ms Nomfundo Mogapi of CSVR said that torture had fallen off the human rights radar in South Africa because the government thinks that it no longer takes place in a democratic South Africa. Reported by Brian Indrelunas, 2 April 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080402061401634C763557

Torture in South Africa prisons remains a challenge, Human Rights Commission chief: The Chief Executive Officer of the South African Human Rights Commission, Mr. Tsediso Thipanyane, told participants at an international conference on torture that torture remains a challenge not only in South Africa's prisons but also in prisons in the region. He also added that South Africa was one of the few countries that had signed the United National Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture aimed at eradicating torture in prisons. At the same conference, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' representative, Mr. Wally Ndiaye, reportedly said that harsh conditions and torture continued to be widespread in Southern African prisons. Reported by SABC News, 3 April 2008, at

http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/social/0,2172,167009,00.html see also

<http://www.dispatch.co.za/article.aspx?id=189682>

American NGO trains prison inspectors to investigate rape: Researchers from a United States based NGO, Stop Prisoner Rape, in conjunction with their South African partner, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, have been cooperating with the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons to train prison visitors on investigating rape in prisons. Ms. Lovisa Stannow, the Executive Director of Stop Prisoner Rape, said that the Judicial Inspectorate had cooperated well with the trainers. Stop Prisoner Rape and some South African NGOs that work in prisons or on prison-related issues recently held a meeting in Cape Town at which they discussed strategies aimed at combating rape in prisons. Ms. Sasha Gear, senior researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation said that sexual violence was increasingly becoming an issue that could not be ignored. Lukas Muntingh of Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative said that prison authorities knew that prison rape existed but do not know how to deal with it and it was therefore driven underground. Reported by Brian Indrelunas, 4 April 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080404061041826C280160

Prison inspectors commended for participating in workshop on torture: Ms. Amanda Dissel, of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, commended the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) and the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons in South Africa for participating in the International Conference on the Prevention of Torture in Cape Town. Ms Dissel said that the conference was an important platform for the two institutions to strengthen their oversight roles. Reported by Sabc news, 4 April 2008, at

http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/general/0,2172,167069,00.html see also

http://www.mg.co.za/articlepage.aspx?area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/&articleid=336315

Inmates stabbed for refusing to join prison gangs: At least 25 prisoners at Westville B Prison in Durban were allegedly stabbed by gang members with sharp objects, including knives, for refusing to join the gangs. There were also reports that four prisoners had been stabbed to death but the Department

Correctional Services denied this. One prisoner who spoke to the media said the non-gang members were unhappy about being subjected to gang rule. They had formed a forum to stop gang rituals in the cells. This did not please the gang members who threatened to 'spill blood' if the non-gang members ignored their demands and accused non-gang members of colluding with the authorities to oppress prisoners. The gang members stabbed several non-gang members but warders restored order in the prison. Mr. Derrick Mdluli of the Justice for Prisoners and Detainees Trust proposed a meeting of prison officials, gangs and non-gang prisoners to resolve any disputes. Reported by Chris Makhaye, 6 April 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080406084449416C494031

Department to investigate the cause of prison gang violence: The Department of Correctional Services Regional Commissioner, Mr. Nathi Nhleko, said that the Department was to investigate the cause of violence at Westville Prison which led to prison gang members stabbing more than 25 non-gang prisoners. Mr. Nhleko added that the investigation would take about three weeks. The non-gang members were reportedly stabbed by gang members for refusing to obey gang rules. Reported by Bronwyn Gerretsen, 7 April 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080407054833337C476044

Prisoner complains of 'ghosts' in prison: The alleged attacker of two prison nurses applied in vain at the Pretoria High Court to be moved from a specific section of the C-Max prison because 'there were ghosts'. Handcuffed Thabo Amos Masinga (21) asked Acting Judge Solly Sithole to move him from section 85 to section 81 because there were 'ghosts' and because he had to exercise alone. Judge Sithole's advice was: 'He should exercise with the ghosts! It is a consequence of being in jail. You hallucinate if you're alone in a cell.' The judge rejected the application. According to a report on the News24 website, Masinga allegedly attacked and raped two nurses at the Baviaanspoort Prison northeast of Pretoria in March 2005. He has been referred to Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital for evaluation, but a bed has not yet been available at the hospital. Reported by Jeanne-Marié Versluis, 9 April 2008, Beeld at http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2303154,00.html

Prisoner wins appeal against conviction on evidence obtained through torture: The Supreme Court of Appeal allowed Mr. Bongani Mthembu's appeal against some of the charges of which he was convicted based on evidence obtained through torture. The Court held that a person could not be convicted on evidence obtained in violation of another person's right to freedom from torture. The Court added that the right to freedom from torture was absolute and that it was protected under the South African Constitution and the UN Convention against Torture, which South Africa has ratified. The Court said that it was regrettable that the police had resorted to the use of torture to obtain the evidence used to convict the Mr. Mthembu. Reported by Sapa, 10 April 2008, Legalbrief, at <http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20080410152735778> see also <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4347807>

Warders on trial for allegedly murdering three prisoners: The trial of six Krugersdorp prison warders, Petrus Mkhwanazi, Regan Rudidge, Sandile Kleinbooi, Cleopas Mfuzi, Simphiwe Shabangu, and Donald Letsoamotse, for the alleged murder of three prisoners was postponed to 13 October 2008. In addition to the charge of murder, the six are also on trial for attempted murder. Reported by Dudu Busani, 15 April 2008, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=748188>

Prisoners' right to privacy not absolute, judge: Pretoria High Court Judge, Charl Rabie, dismissed a group of prisoners' application in which they wanted the Department of Correctional Services to allow them to paste papers over their cell windows so that they may have privacy and sleep properly at night. The prisoners claimed in their application that they could not rest properly at night because of the bright lights shining into their cells. They argued that this further violated their right to privacy. The Department, in opposing their application, argued that they were high risk prisoners who had to be monitored constantly. The judge, after inspecting the prison at night, said that there was nothing that prevented the prisoners from sleeping and that they should remember that in a prison they were not supposed to lead a luxurious life. Reported by Sapa, 24 April 2008, Mail and Guardian, at <http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx?articleid=337725> see <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=63801,1,22>

HEALTH CARE

[Top of Page](#)

Prisoner's relatives only talk about his health with the Department's approval: Mr. Mo Shaik, a brother of businessman Schabir Shaik who is serving a 15-year prison term for corruption and fraud, said that he could not comment on his brother's health condition without the Department of Correctional Service's approval. Mo Shaik was responding to reports that his brother had been re-admitted to the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital with health problems related to his blood pressure. Reported by Sapa, 1 April 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080401182512131C984411

Department does not discuss prisoners' medical conditions: Spokesperson of the Department of Correctional Services, Manelisi Wolela, said that as a matter of principle the Department does not discuss the health of a prisoner undergoing treatment. The Department's statement was a reaction to media requests for clarification on whether a prominent businessman, Schabir Shaik, who is serving a 15 year prison sentence for fraud, was indeed admitted to hospital and if so, for what. Reported by Sapa, 4 April 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080404152238353C939590

Rights body calls upon government to accredit more prisons to dispense ARVs: Human Rights Watch called upon the South African government to equip all prisons with the relevant facilities to enable them to dispense ARVs to prisoners living with HIV/AIDS who need treatment. The rights body made the recommendation to the UN Human Rights Council when it was about to consider South Africa's report under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. Statement by Human Rights Watch, 11 April 2008 at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200804110928.html?viewall=1>

Prisoner 'as sick as a dog': Mr. Schabir Shaik's brother, Mr. Yunus Shaik, said that his brother was 'as sick as a dog.' Mr. Yunus Shaik disclosed that to the media after Mr. Schabir Shaik, a businessman who is serving a prison sentence for fraud at Westville prison in Durban was discharged from Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital after undergoing tests. Mr. Schabir Shaik had been admitted to hospital because of fears that his high blood pressure was deteriorating, which could damage some of his organs. The Department of Correctional Services did not disclose for how long Mr. Schabir Shaik had stayed in hospital before his discharge. Reported by Bronwyn Gerretsen, 23 April 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080423053806513C774826 see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080423142706630C458669

UNSENTENCED PRISONERS

[Top of Page](#)

Detention without trial widespread, researcher: Jean Redpath, who participated in a research project for the Open Society Foundation (SA) on bail in South Africa argued that it is far more difficult for prisoners to be granted bail than what people may think. After studying over 27 000 cases at three metropolitan courts, the researcher concluded that many prisoners spent time in detention awaiting-trial because of the numerous legal obstacles they had to overcome before being granted bail. Opinion by Jean Redpath, 21 April 2008, Business Day, at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/opinion.aspx?ID=BD4A752683>

Prisoners awaiting trial for years because of lack of enough judges: Judge Ratha Mokgoathheng of the Johannesburg High Court postponed the case of 13 prisoners who have been awaiting trial for close on two years to October 2008 because there is a shortage of judges. The judge said that everyday his court

dealt with 50 matters, yet four other judges were unavailable. Reported by Dudu Busani, 22 April 2008, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=753284>

Prisoner alleges that his lawyer was plotting to convict him: The trial of Mr. Johannes Mowers for 41 counts including rape, housebreaking and abduction was postponed before the Cape High Court when he claimed that he did not trust his lawyer on the ground that he was colluding with the prosecution to convict him. Mr. Mowers fired his lawyer as a result. The prosecution objected to the firing of the lawyer, saying that it would delay the proceedings. Reported by Staff reported and Sapa, 22 April 2008, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4367688>

Cases to be postponed using audio-video equipments: A pilot project is underway in Port Elizabeth where prisoners seeking the postponement of their cases will no longer need to be taken to courts but their cases will be dealt with via video link-up. Prisoners will face a camera and screen at St Alban's prison, while the magistrate granting the postponement will be seated at North End or New Brighton courts. Port Elizabeth senior magistrate, Mr. Christo Schutte, said that the pilot project was seen as a modern way to deal with the influx of postponement cases the courts see daily. Schutte added that the project, if successful, will minimise the transportation of prisoners from prisons to courts which is also a security risk. Reported by Gareth Wilson, 24 April 2008, The Herald, at http://www.eherald.co.za/herald/news/n13_24042008.htm

Department not aware of the number of child offenders assessed: The Department of Correctional Services and other departments, while appearing before the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development, could not tell accurately how many of the more than 10,000 child offenders arrested annually, were assessed by a social worker to determine if they qualify for diversion. This emerged when the Child Justice Bill, which proposes the diversion of deserving child offenders from the criminal justice system, was debated by the Portfolio Committee. The Committee asked the Departments to, at a later date, avail it with the statistics of the number of child offenders who were being or who had been diverted for it to assess whether it was feasible to include a provision in the Bill which required the diversion of such offenders. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, April 2008, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/Articles/TarkArticle.aspx?ID=3192728>

PAROLE AND SENTENCING

[Top of Page](#)

Prisoner's relative suggests correctional supervision instead of imprisonment: Mo Shaik, brother of a convicted businessman Schabir Shaik, appealed to the Department of Correctional Services to place his brother on correctional supervision instead of direct imprisonment. Mo Shaik's statement was made after his brother was admitted to Durban's Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital to undergo tests to determine the extent of organ damage, if any, caused by persistent problems with high blood pressure. However, Mo Shaik stated that his brother's release on correctional supervision should follow the law. Reported by Sapa, 4 April 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080404152238353C939590

Parolee convicted of robbery and rebuked: Mr. Bruce Khona, who was on parole for robbery was found guilty of another robbery and the judge, on convicting him, reportedly told him that his re-offending while on parole was 'an extremely aggravating factor' which showed that he had not reformed. The judge also dismissed his application for leave to appeal on the ground that even the appellant court would come to the same conclusion as the trial court. Reported by Sapa, 9 April 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080409161320928C253168

Communist party vows to continue blocking the release of two political prisoners: South Africa Communist Party (SACP) spokesman, Malesela Maleka, said that the party was still opposed to the application for presidential pardon by the two prisoners who were convicted for the murder of their party leader, Chris Hani. Mr. Maleka said the SACP would consider ending its opposition for a presidential pardon

for the killers on condition that they "speak the whole truth." Reported by Werner Swart, 10 April 2008, The Times, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=745091>

Awaiting trial parolee abandons bail application: Mr. Rashaad Kruger, who was on parole for rape, was arrested and detained for the murder of his daughter and when he appeared before court, declined to apply for bail. This was reportedly after a group of protesters who were chanting near the court building demanded that Mr. Kruger should not be granted bail. Mr. Kruger's lawyer, Liezel Zeeman, told the court that her client had abandoned his bail application and requested the court to remand him in custody until 23 July 2008 which the court did. Reported by Sapa, 11 April 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080411110714668C112595

Presidential pardon deadline extended: The reference group set up to consider the applications for Presidential Pardons of political prisoners recommended to President Thabo Mbeki to extend the time frame within which such prisoners should file their applications for consideration from April to 31 May 2008. This was after the group received only a handful of applications and the deadline within which the prisoners had to put in their applications was coming to an end. Those to be considered for Presidential Pardon do not include prisoners who were denied amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Committee. However, the Chairperson of the reference group, Mr. Tertius Delpont, said that they will ask the President to consider including the excluded prisoners so that they can also be considered for Presidential Pardon. Reported by Sabc News, 14 April 2008, at <http://www.sabcnews.co.za/politics/government/0,2172,167618,00.html> see also <http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20080415165810479>

PRISON CONSTRUCTION

[Top of Page](#)

Five new prisons will cost a lot more than estimated: Taxpayers may have to pay more than R20 billion over the next 25 years for five new prisons which are planned to be completed by 2010. According to Treasury and officials addressing the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services in February 2008, the prisons will be designed, constructed, operated and maintained by the private sector on a 25-year contract and is the easiest and quickest way to create additional capacity for 15 000 prisoners. Die Burger estimates that the total cost will be in excess of R21.5 billion due to the increased cost of construction and the interest (estimated at 17%) that need be paid on the loan.

Reported by Carien Du Plessis, Die Burger, 10 April 2008, <http://152.111.1.251/argief/berigte/dieburger/2008/04/11/SK/8/cdprivaattronke.html>

ESCAPES AND SECURITY

[Top of Page](#)

Warders testify against prisoners whose attempted escape led to the death of another prisoner: Three Leeuwkop (reported as Leeuhof) prison warders appearing before the Vereeniging circuit court described how an attempted escape by three inmates led to the death of an awaiting-trial prisoner. The warders alleged that one prisoner, France Dube, with two other inmates overpowered a prison warder and took his prison jacket and personal belongings. They also assaulted a female warder and took a pistol from one of the prison offices. They fired aimlessly in their bid to escape and as a result a stray bullet hit one of the inmates, Patrick Molubi, who was watching the drama from his cell window. He died of the wound. Reported by Ntwaagae Seleka, 24 April 2008, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=755132>

Department discovers escape of internationally wanted criminal after 8 days: Mr. Jean Claude

LaCote, over whose head hangs several international arrest warrants, escaped from Johannesburg Central prison, where he had been awaiting trial on a number of charges including murder and fraud. The Department of Correctional Services only discovered that LaCote had escaped after 8 days. LaCote was taken out of Johannesburg Central prison by two men and two women posing as police officers "for an investigation". After this, the prison authorities never saw him again. One of his victims, Mr. Noel Hanley, has put a reward out of R 1 million up for whoever has information that will lead to his arrest and prosecution. Reported by Carine Hartman, 26 April 2008, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4374566> see also <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4374615>

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

[Top of Page](#)

KENYA

Human rights NGOs allege that doctor was denied access to prison to treat torture victims:

Human Rights Watch and Kenya-based human rights organisations alleged that various human rights violations, including torture, were being perpetrated in the politically unstable Mt. Elgon area of Kenya leading to the suffering and death of many people. The organisations alleged that some of the captured rebels were tortured, detained in overcrowded prisons and that many of them needed medical attention. However, a doctor was denied access to one of the prisons to treat the prisoners. Press release by Human Rights Watch, 4 April 2008, at

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/03/kenya18421.htm>

Prison officials deny torture allegations: Mr. Jonathan Koech, the officer in charge of security at Kitale GK Prison, where tortured suspected Sabaot Land Defence Force militiamen were being detained said that they were not tortured in prison. Koech said that the suspects were tortured by members of the armed forces who then afterwards brought them to the prison. He added that prison authorities were not there to torture people but rather to keep them in safe custody. Reported by George Omonso, 21 April 2008, Daily Nation, at

http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontententry.asp?category_id=1&newsid=121597

Three inmates die of lethal brew: Three prisoners at the Naivasha Maximum Security Prison died after taking a lethal brew prepared by one of the inmates. Five others were admitted to hospital in a critical condition. This was after the warders started striking over poor working conditions. The warders' strike also paralysed court proceedings leading to the postponement of many cases. Reported by Nation team, 26 April 2008, Nation Media, at

http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontententry.asp?category_id=1&newsid=121927 see also http://www.nationmedia.com/dailynation/nmgcontententry.asp?category_id=39&newsid=122062

MALAWI

Former prisoner steals from prison office: Mr. Witala Soko, who had just completed a six-year prison term for burglary, allegedly broke into the district's prison office and stole two rifles, three pairs of handcuffs and a police radio. The police spokesman for Dedza district, Mr. Franklin Gausi, said that it was a rare incident for an ex-prisoner or any other person to break into a prison office and steal guns. Mr. Soko who was arrested selling the stolen items was to stand trial for burglary. Reported by Cape Times, 8 April 2008, at <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4341950>

Prison TB programme to extend to communities: The Director of the Tuberculosis Control Programme in Malawi, Professor Felix Salaniponi, while speaking at a press conference before the launch of the Prison TB Policy, said that TB was a great threat in Malawi and in many Southern African countries as it was closely linked to HIV/AIDS. Prof Salaniponi added that the TB in Prisons Policy was very important because in prisons the devastating effect of the disease is 10 times higher compared to that outside prison. Prof.

Salaniponi said that the programme would be extended to communities, hospitals and private clinics so that the disease is fought effectively. Reported by African News, 14 April 2008, at http://www.africanews.com/site/list_messages/17425

MOROCCO

Prisoners escape: The Justice Ministry said that nine prisoners, most of them serving life sentences for masterminding suicide bombings, escaped from Kenitra prison and that the relevant authorities were investigating the circumstances leading to their escape. The prisoners on their escape reportedly left a notice on the prison wall saying that they had escaped because they had suffered injustice. Reported by BBC News, 8 April 2008, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7335004.stm>

CHAD

President pardons French prisoners: Chad's President Idriss Deby pardoned the six French prisoners who were transferred to France to serve their sentences there after being convicted in Chad for attempting to abduct over 100 Chadian children to Europe. They were transferred under a cooperation agreement between Chad and France. The prisoners had been sentenced to 8-year prison terms each and were released after serving less than a year of their sentences. Reported by James Mackenzie, 31 March 2008, Canada.com, at

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/world/story.html?id=2ea7ae0c-6ae5-45bf-ada6-88155ab371dd&k=53476>

UGANDA

Female prisoners allegedly share cells with males: Pader Woman Member of Parliament, Judith Akello Franca told the Parliamentary Defence Committee that due to overcrowding in Patongo Prison, the only prison in the district, female prisoners shared accommodation and other facilities with men. She added that this was unacceptable and pathetic, and called upon the government to explain how that could be allowed to happen. However, when contacted for comment, the State Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Matia Kasaija said he was hearing about cell sharing for the first time. Reported by Yasiin Mugerwa, 23 April 2008, The Monitor, at

http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Female_inmates_share_cells_with_males_-MPs.shtml

Prison land given to investor: The Internal Affairs State Minister, Mr. Matia Kasaija told Members of the Defence and Internal Affairs Committee that the government gave away Kirinya Prison land in Jinja district to a Malaysian investor. Mr. Kasaija added that President Yoweri Museveni directed the prison to be relocated within 12 months as from December 2007. The Minister said that the Finance Ministry had not released the money to relocate the prison to another place and time was running out. Reported by Madinah Tebajjukira, 24 April 2008, The New Vision, at

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/624296> see also

http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Kirinya_Prison_given_away_to_Indian_investor.shtml

Minister blames judiciary for prison overcrowding: While appearing before the Defence and Internal Affairs Committee to defend the prisons budget, the Internal Affairs State Minister, Matia Kasaija, blamed the judiciary for the overcrowding of prisons. The Minister said that if judges were doing their work properly and decided the cases expeditiously, there would be very few prisoners awaiting trial and the prison population would be reduced drastically. Reported by Madinah Tebajjukira, 27 April 2008, The New Vision, at

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/624749>

NIGERIA

Awaiting-trial political prisoner charged in a closed court: A key leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend), Mr. Henry Okah, was charged with treason in a heavily guarded closed court session in the northern city of Jos. It was the first time Mr. Okah appeared in court since he was secretly extradited from Angola in February. His lawyers questioned why their client was being tried in

a closed court session, yet al coup plotters in Nigeria had been tried in open courts. Reported by BBC News, 4 April 2008, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7330074.stm>

ETHIOPIA

Prison conditions are poor, journalist: Mr. Leonard Vincent, the head of the Africa desk at Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders, RSF), said that in Ethiopia many journalists were afraid of criticising the government for fear that they may end up in prison which he said 'have a very bad reputation'. He said that prisons are overcrowded, characterised by poor hygienic conditions and prisoners have restricted visiting rights. Interview by Miriam Mannak, IPS correspondent, 10 April 2008, IPS at <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=41934>

SIERRA LEONE

Prisons chief fired: The Director of Prisons, Mr. Foday Soko Conteh, was reportedly relieved of his duties because of poor performance. Mr. Conteh had been prisons chief for more than 15 years. He was reportedly replaced by his deputy, Mr. Moses Showers. Mr. Showers promised to improve the working conditions of his colleagues. Reported by Awareness Times News, 9 April 2008, at http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20058187.shtml

CAMEROON

Report highlights poor prison conditions: A US Department of State report illustrated that prison conditions in Cameroon were poor, torture was being used in some detention facilities, and that many prisoners were awaiting trial. The report added that despite the introduction of the new Criminal Code in 2007 and the establishment of human rights offices in various parts of the country, human rights violations continued to take place, including prisoners' rights violations. Reported by Ernest Sumelong, 11 April 2008, The Post, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804110631.html>

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Prisoner's lawyer denied access to his client: the lawyer, Mr. Ponciano Mbomio Nvo, who was assigned to defend Mr. Simon Mann, a British national awaiting trial for allegedly attempting to overthrow the government, said that he had never had access to his client and that Mann's case file had not been given to him to prepare his defence. Mr. Mbomio Nvo also said that his client was being detained illegally. Reported by Sapa-AFP, 13 April 2008, Mail and Guardian, at http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=336862&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__africa

Opposition leader allegedly tortured to death: Amnesty International said that a member of the banned opposition Progress Party of Equatorial Guinea, Mr. Saturnino Ncogo Mbomio, was arrested and tortured to death while detained at Black Beach prison. The police denied the allegations, saying that Mr. Mbomio suffered a fractured skull after falling from his bed in Black Beach prison. Amnesty International called on the government to immediately investigate the circumstances surrounding Mr. Mbomio death. Reported by Reuters, 17 April 2008, at <http://africa.reuters.com/top/news/usnBAN726366.html>

SOMALIA

Former Supreme Court judge pardoned: The President of Somalia's interim government, Abdullahi Yusuf, pardoned the country's former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Yusuf Ali Harun, after he spent close to seven months in prison. Mr. Ali Harun and another judge were accused by the Somali government of embezzling public funds hence their arrest and detention. Reported by Garowe online, 10 April 2008, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804101159.html>

GHANA

Human rights body visits prisons: The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice started conducting periodic visits to prisons in a bid to monitor prison conditions. Ms. Anna Bossman, the Acting Commissioner, said that the Commission's visits to prisons are meant to specifically check on sanitation, accommodation, feeding and recreation facilities to ensure there were no torture, cruelty and degrading treatment meted out on inmates. Ms. Bossman also called upon the government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and establishing a prisons visiting mechanism as required under the Protocol. Reported by Modern Ghana, 16 April 2008, at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/162791/1/Ghana-to-ratify-convention-on-torture>

ZIMBABWE

South African prisoner running out of medication: A South African satellite technician, Siphon Maseko, who was arrested for allegedly contravening the Information and Protection of Privacy Act and detained in a Zimbabwean prison, ran low on his medication for diabetes and needed to be admitted to hospital. His employer, Globecast, said that Mr. Maseko was being looked after by a doctor from the South African embassy. South African Foreign Affairs spokesman, Ronnie Mamoepa, said that the South African embassy in Zimbabwe was making arrangements for Mr. Maseko's hospitalisation. Reported by Sapa, 7 April 2008, Cape Times, at <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4340338>

Journalist alleges that detainees are not fed: Mr. Stephen Bevan, a British journalist who was arrested in Zimbabwe for allegedly violating a repealed law, said that many detainees at the cells where he was detained did not have food to eat unless their relatives brought them food. Mr. Bevan said that the prison guards treated him well but that the prison was infested with 'lice and all sorts of other biting insects' and that it was the 'filthiest place' he had ever seen in his life. Reported by Sebastien Berger, 21 April 2008, Telegraph, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/04/17/wzim317.xml>

NAMIBIA

Prison embarks on reforming inmates: Namibian prison officials marked Prison Day by calling upon members of the public to know that prisons are institutions aimed at reforming and rehabilitating inmates. Hardap Maximum Security Prison Governor, Katrina Hanse-Himarwa, said that effective and efficient crime-prevention programmes were needed to eradicate crime. Hardap Prison Senior Superintendent, Marven Sankwasa, said the Prison Service had embarked on educational programmes for offenders in their effort to change the institution from a punitive to a rehabilitative one. Reported by Luqman Cloete, 1 April 2008, The Namibian, at <http://www.namibian.com.na/2008/April/national/08F6B17BD5.html>

Minister concerned about overcrowding: The newly appointed Safety and Security Minister, Nicky Iyambo, after visiting Windhoek Central Prison which was overcrowded, said that overcrowding in prisons needed to be addressed. The Minister also expressed concern over the working conditions of prison officials and promised that his office would improve them. Mr. Iyambo also expressed concern over the reports that 50 prisoners on Anti-Retroviral (ARV) treatment are transferred out of the prison daily to receive their treatment at external clinics. Reported by Denver Isaacs, 18 April 2008, The Namibian at <http://www.namibian.com.na/2008/April/national/08FB0AE9F8.html> see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804180705.html>

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