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GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

Large amounts being paid to suspended officials: Times Live reported that the Department of Correctional Services paid R14 million to 481 suspended employees during the 2011 financial year. The reasons for these suspensions reportedly range from financial misconduct, theft, fraud and misuse of state property to sexual harassment and sexual assault, gross negligence resulting in loss of state money. Reported by Caiphus Kgosana, 3 May 2012, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2012/05/03/r52m-for-sitting-at-home>

Affirmative action case goes to court: Business Day reported that the trade union Solidarity challenged the Department of Correctional Services' affirmative action policies in the Western Cape on behalf of five of its members in the Cape Town Labour Court. At the heart of the dispute is the Department's reported insistence "that national demographics should be applied to the employment equity figures of the Western Cape, despite the fact that there are 53% coloureds in the province (as opposed to 8,8% nationally)." Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 22 May 2012, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=172261>

Department owes officials overtime: IOL reported that the Public Servants Association (PSA) and the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) were lamenting the fact that the Department of Correctional Services owed its warders R1.2 billion in overtime pay. The report noted that morale among officials was at an "all-time low," who claim that the "new shift system" was not implemented properly. Reported by Lee Rondgange, 22 May 2012, at <http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/warders-owed-r1-2bn-1.1301864>

Recruitment of information technology experts prioritized: IT Web reported that the Minister of Correctional Services stated before Parliament that her Department had reduced the number of consultants working in its information technology departments from 156 at the end of the 2010/11 financial year to about 45 consultants at the end of 2011/12. These reductions are reportedly part of efforts to reduce reliance on consultants and retain expertise. Reported by Farzana Rasool, 23 May 2012, at http://www.itweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55068:prisoner-e-tagging-a-resounding-success

Proposed audit of heads of prisons: The New Age reported that the National Commissioner, Mr Tom Moyane, had indicated that he thought it would be appropriate to conduct an audit of all heads of prisons regarding the treatment of independent prison visitors (IPVs). The report noted that a number of IPV's had complained that certain heads of prisons had refused them entry into the prisons in order to conduct inspections and communicate with prisoners. Reported by Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, 24 May 2012, at <http://www.thenewage.co.za/51645-1007-53-Prison-heads-to-be-audited>

SENTENCING AND PAROLE

Sentence remissions questioned: IOL reported that President Jacob Zuma's announcement that the sentences of certain categories of prisoners will be decreased by six months for all offences, and by an additional 12 months for non-violent offences, has been criticised for failing to address the actual causes of prison overcrowding, which, it has been argued, occurs in the remand detention facilities.

Reported by Ntando Makhubu, 1 May 2012, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/prisoners-question-logic-of-remission-1.1286539>

Sentence remissions criticised: Politics Web published a statement by the Democratic Alliance wherein the Presidency's decision to remit the sentences of certain prisoners was criticised for having been done in the absence of policy directives, which, it was argued, are essential to "guide the process". Statement authored by James Selfe, 6 May 2012, at <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71654?oid=296554&sn=Detail&pid=71616>

Guidelines for sentence remissions explained: The Citizen reported that sentenced offenders, probationers, parolees and day parolees who were sentenced on or before 27 April 2012 would be granted a six months remission of their sentences irrespective of the crime they committed. An additional twelve months will be granted to all offenders, probationers and parolees who are not serving sentences for aggressive crimes such as murder, robbery and kidnapping. Reported by Avashnee Moodley, 15 May 2012, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/citizen/content/en/citizen/local-news?oid=278458&sn=Detail&pid=146826&First-day-of-freedom-for-thousands>

Remissions policy put under spotlight: allAfrica.com reported that various institutions and experts have questioned the value of the sentence remissions, announced by the Presidency. One of the criticisms is that, given the fact that prison overcrowding occurs mostly in remand detention facilities, the sentence remissions will not actually target the cause of overcrowding. Reported by Hamadziripi Tamukamoyo, allAfrica.com, 15 May 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201205151253.html>

Medical parolees to benefit: Eye Witness News reported that the Minister of Correctional Services had informed the National Assembly that there were 298 prisoners eligible for medical parole in terms of the Correctional Services Amendment Act, which came into effect on 1 March 2012. Reported by Eye Witness, 16 May 2012, at <http://www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/en/2012/05/16/Brothers%20reunited.aspx>

"Fresh start" for prisoner: The New Age reported that Pule Mosipidi, an offender who was sentenced to two years, was the first of 112 inmates from Rooigrond prison to benefit from the President's decision to remit the sentences of certain prisoners. Pule had spent eleven months in prison, but was reportedly "a changed man" and ready to go back into the community. Reported by Elfias Torerai, 16 May 2012, at http://www.thenewage.co.za/50905-1017-53-Fresh_start_for_freed_man

Electronic monitoring to be expanded: Times Live reported that the Minister of Correctional Services had stated that it was "time to extend electronic monitoring to other categories of offenders," including offenders still serving custodial sentences. Reported by Times Live, 23 May 2012, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/scitech/2012/05/23/correctional-services-eager-to-e-tag-more-prisoners-report>

PRISON CONDITIONS

Learning in prison: The Mail and Guardian published a feature piece on education in prison. It stated that the Emthonjeni Youth Centre, the "juvenile section of the Baviaanspoort prison," boasts of a classroom, a library and a computer room. It noted however, that despite such facilities, not all children of compulsory school going age are in fact attending educational classes, which amounts to a violation of the Correctional Services Act. Reported by Bongani Nkosi, 11 May 2012, at <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-05-11-learning-in-prison-is-a-problem>

More prisons to be built: 7th Space reported that the Minister of Correctional Services had announced that six new correctional centres would be built during 2012, and that a further twelve were "in the pipeline". The purported construction of new prisons is reportedly "part of efforts to reduce overcrowding in remand detention facilities." Reported by 7thspace.com, 16 May 2012 at http://7thspace.com/headlines/412629/south_africa_six_new_correctional_centres_to_be_built_12_more_planned.html

Prison overcrowding highest in Western Cape: The Cape Times reported that while the national average for prison overcrowding is at 133% capacity, the average is 142% in the Western Cape, making prison overcrowding the highest in the Western Cape. Reported by capetimes.newspaperdirect.com, 18 May 2012, at <http://capetimes.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/showarticle.aspx?article=a217693f-492c-4f7f-baf6-bf590152a9a8&key=dOFQarMY39I5AsCC2kiyRg%3d%3d&issue=640220120517000000001001>

"Luxurious" treatment in prison: IOL reported that Sifiso Zulu, a man accused of recklessly causing the death of two people, was being detained at Westville Prison's hospital, but was reportedly enjoying luxury treatment: access to his own television set and receiving a steady stream of visitors. Reported by Matthew Savides and Masood Boomgaard, 20 May 2012, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/zulu-taking-it-easy-in-jail-hospital-1.1300296>

SOUTH AFRICANS IMPRISONED ABROAD

Life sentence handed down: The Jakarta Post reported that a South African national was sentenced to life imprisonment for drug trafficking after he was intercepted with 2.97 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine at Ngurah Rai International Airport, Indonesia. Reported by The Jakarta Post, 30 May 2012, at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/bali-daily/2012-05-30/south-african-gets-life-imprisonment.html>

OTHER

Construction of new prisons remains a possibility: The Engineering News reported that the Minister of Correctional Services stated in the National Assembly that the fact that the Department had decided to cancel the public-private partnership procurement process in 2011, did not mean that the possibility of the construction of new prisons had been excluded. Reported by The Engineering News, 16 May 2012, at <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/new-prisons-not-excluded-minister-2012-05-16>

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

ALGERIA

Measures to rehabilitate prisoners: ANSamed reported that the Algerian penitentiary authorities have adopted measures intended to “meaningfully rehabilitate inmates and prepare them for life after prison.” Such measures include the opportunity to study towards a diploma or a degree whilst incarcerated. Reported by the Ansamed, 17 May 2012, at http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/nations/algeria/2012/05/17/Algeria-the-student-behind-bars_6884271.html

Moratorium on death penalty: Kuwait News Agency reported that the Algeria Foreign Minister conveyed to the Algerian Human Rights Commission that the government is continuing to observe a moratorium on the death penalty. The report added that a number of death sentences had been commuted to prison sentences since the advent of the moratorium. Reported by Kuwait News Agency, 30 May 2012, at <http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2244005&language=en>

BURUNDI

Cell phones used for fraudulent activities in prisons: Afriquinfos reported that prisoners from the Mpimba prison are using cell phones to fraudulently acquire money. Certain prisoners reportedly call individuals, announce that they have had a severe accident, and ask for the transfer of funds in order to acquire medical attention. Prisoners then use the funds fraudulently raised to buy basic amenities in the prison. Original report in French. Report by Arnaud Arakaza, 15 May 2012, at <http://www.afriquinfos.com/articles/2012/5/15/ptits-malins-prison-centrale-mpimba-202477.asp>

CAMEROON

Alleged corruption at Douala prison: Camer reported that a donation by a private citizen, intended for the purchase of mattresses for female officers, was allegedly embezzled by the prison administration. An investigation is reportedly being conducted. Original report in French. Report by Flora Ebègnè, 22 May 2012, at <http://www.camer.be/index1.php?art=19450&rub=11:1>

Poor health services: Camer reported that many prisoners at Douala prison are suffering from a number of diseases, the primary cause of which is overcrowding and a lack of mosquito nets. The prison hospital wing reportedly lacks the space and sufficient medication to care for all sick prisoners, and those that are seriously ill cannot be transferred to health care facilities outside the prison. Original report in French. Report by Blaise Bjoukepe, 22 May 2012, <http://www.camer.be/index1.php?art=19440&rub=11:1>

Military barrack used as prisons: Camer reported that two military barracks had been partially transformed into detention centres for the purpose of detaining political prisoners. Civil society organisations have reportedly questioned whether similar oversight mechanisms as those used in traditional prison settings would be used in relation to the new detention facilities. Original report in French. Report by Rodrigue Tongue, 29 May 2012, at <http://www.camer.be/index1.php?art=19549&rub=11:1>

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Cholera outbreak reported: The Huffington Post reported that Oxfam, in response to a cholera outbreak at Bunia’s Central Prison, was providing water and installing hand-washing facilities as part of efforts to prevent the spread of the disease. Reported by The Huffington Post, 21 May 2012, at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/caroline-gluck/behind-prison-walls-in-th_b_1533303.html

Prison in poor condition: Radio Netherlands reported that the living conditions at Munzenze central prison are “deplorable.” Prisoners are reportedly living in extremely overcrowded cells with very few sanitation facilities, and no beds. There is also an infestation of mosquitos and flies in the cells. Reported by Passy Mubalama, 30 May 2012, at <http://www.rnw.nl/africa/article/deplorable-conditions-and-corruption-goma-prison>

IVORY COAST

Prisoners attempt escape: The Vanguard reported that on 4 May 2012 prisoners attempted to escape from Abidjan prison, which houses “most of the country’s political prisoners.” United Nations peacekeeping forces and troops from the Ivorian Republican Force reportedly reinforced security at the prison and managed to prevent some of prisoners from escaping. Reported by the Vanguard, 5

May 2012, at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/jailbreak-foiled-in-ivorian-prison/>

Concern over prison escapes: allAfrica.com reported that the United Nations has voiced its concern over the high number of mass prison escapes that have occurred in the country during 2012. It reportedly reiterated its commitment to work with the Cote D'Ivorian government to address the issue. Reported by allAfrica.com, 5 May 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201205070011.html>

Prison officials to be disciplined: The Nation reported that President Ouattara stated that prison officials implicated in the "mass prison escape," which occurred on 5 May 2012 and in which 52 prisoners escaped from Maca prison, would be disciplined. Reported by The Nation, 9 May 2012, at <http://www.thenationonlineng.net/2011/index.php/news-update/45990-prison-officers-will-be-sanctioned-for-jail-break-ouattara.html>

LIBERIA

Taylor to oppose jail term in Britain: The Guardian reported that former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, had indicated that he would appeal a decision to make him serve a sentence of imprisonment in Britain, claiming that such a decision would leave him 'culturally isolated' and constitute a 'punishment within a punishment'. The Special Court for Sierra Leone found Taylor guilty in April 2012 for aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity. Reported by Owen Bowcott, 11 May 2012, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/11/charles-taylor-jail-uk>

MOROCCO

Prisoners on hunger strike: Defence Web reported that a number of Muslim prisoners are on hunger strike in protest against alleged unfair detention, mistreatment and torture. Reported by Defence Web, 16 May 2012, at http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=25569:jailed-morocco-islamists-on-hunger-strike-campaigners&catid=3:Civil%20Security&Itemid=113

Prisoner dies during hunger strike: The Washington Post reported that a prisoner died in a Moroccan prison after a two-month hunger strike, protesting poor conditions of detention and torture. The prisoner was one of nearly 160 Muslim prisoners on hunger strike in prisons across Morocco. Reported by The Washington Post, 20 May 2012, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/imprisoned-islamist-dies-after-2-month-hunger-strike-in-moroccan-prison/2012/05/20/gIQAdZFTdU_story.html

Musician sentenced to imprisonment: Biladi reported that the rap singer, Mouad Belghouate, was sentenced to one-year imprisonment for charges related to the recording of a song in which he criticised police corruption. Original report in French. Report by Biladi, 10 May 2012, at <http://biladi.ma/1118947-maroc-un-de-prison-pour-une-chanson.html>.

NIGERIA

Prisoners released: IOL reported that on 4 May 2012 militants from the Islamist group Boko Haram stormed a prison in the northeastern region of Nigeria, killing two guards and setting free a number of prisoners linked to Boko Haram. Reported by IOL, 4 May 2012, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/nigeria-islamists-storm-prison-1.1289747>

Prison overcrowding: This Day reported that legal experts have criticized the state of Nigeria's prisons, arguing that they are overcrowded, unclean and that prison officials lack morale. The article added that alternatives to imprisonment would need to be implemented in order to deal with the problem of overcrowding in prisons and create a lasting solution. Reported by This Day, 13 May 2012, at <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/nigerian-prisons-death-traps-or-reform-centres-/115669/>

RWANDA

Prisoner well looked after: The Independent reported that Issa Hassan Sesay, former leader of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebel group, who was convicted of the international crimes of rape, torture and killing, is being "well looked after at the Mpanga Prison." He is reportedly detained in the "international section" of the prison, which compared to "local" section, enjoys better conditions and treatment. Reported by Andrew Mwenga, 8 May 2012, at <http://www.independent.co.ug/rwanda-ed/rwanda/5738-torture-in-a-rwandan-prison>

SOMALIA

New prison built: CNN reported that Somali pirates, captured on the high seas and then prosecuted and convicted by various different countries, are being transferred to a new prison in Somalia. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has reportedly financed the prison transfers as well as the new prison facility itself. Reported by Mike Mount, 7 May 2012, at <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/05/07/new-pirate-prison-in-somalia-aims-to-relieve-international-overload/>

SOMALILAND

Death penalty: The BBC reported that a military court in Hargeisa, the capital of the self-proclaimed Somaliland, sentenced 17 civilians to death for attacking a military base. Reported by the BBC, 17 May 2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18101584>

TANZANIA

Government owes Prisons Service: In2eastfrica reported that the government and various public institutions owe the “Prison Services” over two billion shillings. The debt reportedly stems from food supply, construction work and the supply of agricultural products. Reported by in2eastfrica, 16 May 2012, at <http://in2eastfrica.net/tanzania-government-owes-prison-corporation-2bn/>

TOGO

Increasing number of deaths in prisons: RFI reported that the Togolese Human Rights League has voiced its concern over the increasing number of deaths in prisons which occur as a result of ill health and over-crowding. The prison administration is reportedly considering a number of solutions to the problem, including releasing certain pre-trial detainees on bail. Original report in French. Report by RFI, 18 May 2012, at <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20120518-togo-prison-lome-cacit-ligue-togolaise-droits-homme-kodjo-gnambi-garba>.

TUNISIA

Prison transformed in museum: Kapitalis reported that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay congratulated the Tunisian authorities for having closed down one of its “worst prisons,” Ennadhour. The prison is now open to the public as a museum. Civil society organisations have reportedly called on the government to continue to improve prison conditions. Original report in French. Report by I. B, 3 May 2012, at <http://www.kapitalis.com/fokus/62-national/9680-ou-en-est-la-reforme-du-systeme-carceral-en-tunisie.html>.

UGANDA

Prisons receive new vehicles: The Saturday Monitor reported that the Uganda Prisons Services recently received six new motor vehicles from the government, in conjunction with the Justice Law and Order Sector and other private donors. The six vehicles are reportedly part of the 13 vehicles that the Prisons Services were meant to have received at the end of the 2011 financial year. Reported by The Saturday Monitor, 14 May 2012, at <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Relief/688334/1405308/-/6dt0ofz/-/index.html>

Repatriation of prisoners: allAfrica.com reported that Parliament had approved a Bill that provides for the repatriation of foreign citizens in Ugandan prisons. Although the Bill is reportedly tailored to principally facilitate the repatriation of convicted prisoners between Uganda and the 54 Commonwealth countries, Ugandans in prisons of non-commonwealth countries will also benefit from the Bill in certain circumstances. Reported by Moses Walubiri, 22 May 2012, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201205221363.html>

ZAMBIA

Poor prison conditions: News 24 reported that the Vice President Guy Scott visited Mukobeko maximum security prison and described the conditions there as “wretched,” with extremely overcrowded cells and poor sanitation facilities. The report notes that the country’s “slow justice system” is one of the primary causes of prison overcrowding. Reported by News24.com, 21 May 2012, at <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Zambias-Scott-shocked-by-state-of-prison-20120521>

President praised: The Times reported that the Prisons Care and Counseling Association praised President Michael Sata for releasing more than 2 000 in commemoration of Africa Freedom Day. The report added that the mass-release would go a long way in decongesting overcrowded Zambian prisons. Reported by the Times, 26 May 2012, at <http://www.times.co.zm/?p=10936>

ZIMBABWE

Conditions of detention criticized: IOL reported that a journalist from New Zealand, who was detained in Zimbabwe in connection with “illegal reporting” has described his 25-day detention period at the Beitbridge and Harare Prisons as being “hell.” He, and other prisoners, were reportedly repeatedly interrogated and assaulted by police officers. Reported by IOL, 14 May 2012, at <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/nz-journalist-tells-of-hell-in-zim-jail-1.1296054>

Call to support former prisoners: The Herald reported that Vice President Joyce Mujuru emphasised the need to support former prisoners as their “re-integration into society has economic and social benefits to the country.” These remarks were reportedly made at the launch of the 2012 Prison Outreach and Re-integration Programme. Reported by Felix Share, 16 May 2012, at http://www.herald.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=41651:vp-mujuru-calls-for-support-for-ex-convicts&catid=37:top-stories&Itemid=130

Prisoners repeatedly abused: The Zimbabwean reported that Jenni Williams, a member of Woman of Zimbabwe Arise, stated that prisoners are “always prone to being beaten and abused by prison officers and police officers.” Williams has herself reportedly been detained 43 times. Reported by the Zimbabwean, 25 May 2012, at http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/news/zimbabwe/58462/zimbabwes-women-activists-face-filthy.html?utm_source=thezim&utm_medium=homepage&utm_campaign=listarticle&utm_content=textlink

OTHER

Gender inequalities effect imprisonment: Think Africa Press reported that even though women only make up a small percentage of the total prison population, “an overstretched system ensures that their specific needs are seldom catered for.” In addition, the report noted that gender inequalities and female dis-empowerment are deep and widespread in Africa, but women are “particularly marginalised in the substandard environments of prisons run by predominantly male administrations.” Reported by Nana Adea-Amoakoh, 2 May 2012, at <http://thinkafricapress.com/gender/prison-crimes-women-africa>



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