



30 Days Dae Izinsuku

Project of the Community Law
Centre

CSPRI '30 Days/Dae/Izinsuku' February 2010

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February 2010

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GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

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Prison revenue on the increase: A report in The Citizen said that the Department of Correctional Services is expecting a substantial increase in budget revenue for 2010. According to Finance Minister, Pravin Gordhan, prison revenue grew from R100 million in 2006/07 to R136.7 million in 2009/10. The report also said revenue from prisoners is expected to reach R161 million in 2012/13 - to be generated from selling products made in correctional centre workshops, hiring out offender labor, and letting accommodation to personnel. The report also stated that "spending in the department grew from R9.3 billion in 2006/07, to R13.8 billion in 2009/10". SAPA, 17 February 2010, The Citizen at

<http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=116529,1,22>

National Commissioner dismissed: According to a report in The Cape Times, Correctional Services Minister, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, is said to have terminated the contract of Correctional Services National Commissioner, Xoliswa Sibeko. It is alleged that Sibeko's contract was due to expire in August this year. A Ministry spokesperson said that the decision of Mapisa-Nqakula came after consultations with the Public Service and Administration Minister, Richard Baloyi. The Department is currently looking for a new national commissioner, even though according to The Cape Times report, no reasons have been given for Sibeko's axing. She was accused of renting a R35 000-a-month property in Pretoria, even though an official residence was available to her, but was acquitted in the subsequent disciplinary inquiry. Cape Times, 22 February 2010, at

<http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.phpfSectionId=3235&fRequestedUrl=%2Findex.php%3FfArticleId%3D5363938>
(Subscription needed)

Prison labour union contest prison housing policy: Members of the prison labour union are reported to have filed court papers contesting the Department of Correctional Services' new housing policy, News24 reported. Victor

Dladla of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) said "The application has been made... the affidavit was filed by our lawyers two weeks ago but no correspondence has been received on whether or not the department will oppose it ". The Minister of Correctional Services, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, is reported to have expressed shock at the union's intentions, saying that the drafting of the policy, followed years of successive warnings by Treasury regarding the issue of "double-dipping" by some officials. SAPA, 22 February 2010, News24, at

http://www.news24.com/Content/SouthAfrica/Politics/1057/60b5d6931e1648c1934052107113a694/22-02-2010-09-03/Popcru_in_court_over_housing

PAROLE AND SENTENCING

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Zuma rejects 230 applications for pardon: A report in BuaNews stated that President Jacob Zuma has completed his review of applications for pardon associated with the Inkatha Freedom Party, (IFP). According to the report, the presidency is alleged to have said that "Out of the 384 applications, he has decided to reject 230 applications. The applicants will be informed of the outcome within a reasonable time through the normal channels". BuaNews, 5 February 2010, at <http://www.buanews.gov.za/news/10/10020510551001>

Kimberly prison cost taxpayers R600 million more: A report in News24 said that Members of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Corrective Services have expressed shock when informed that the cost to build a modern medium security prison at Kimberly rose from R250m in 2004 to an astronomical R857m. According to the report, the prison which will house 3,000 prisoners should have been completed in 2008 already. Reported by Lizel Steenkamp, 10 February 2010, News24, at <http://www.property24.com/articles/top-stories/kimberley-prison-cost-r600m-more/11152>

R1.4b to build new prisons: It was reported by Business Report that the government is planning to step up its fight against crime in the 2010 budget allocation to the Justice Department. According to the report, the Department of Correctional Services has been allocated R1.4 billion to cover the cost of constructing new prisons. However, it is only due to be paid in 2012/13. It is alleged that the government will also build four private prisons, which government advisers believe to be the most cost-effective way of creating extra bed space for prisoners. Business Report, 17 February 2010, at <http://www.busrep.co.za/index.phpfSectionId=552&fArticleId=5356252>

Transkei criminals received harsher prison sentences: The Constitutional Court is reviewing the legislation that results in harsher sentences for criminals in the former Transkei. According to a Business Day report, two men were convicted under the Dangerous Weapons Act and sentenced respectively to six and five years' imprisonment in the Transkei. The sentences, imposed by a district court magistrate, exceeded the penal jurisdictional limitations of three years set by the Criminal Procedure Act. "People who commit a crime of violence, using a weapon, on this side of the Kei River are punished differently from people who commit the same crime on the other side of the Kei" Judge Irma Schoeman said. Reported by Ernest Mabuza, 17 February 2010, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/Articles/Content.aspx?id=93900>

New rule for presidential pardon: The Mail & Guardian reported that the Constitutional Court has upheld a High Court decision interdicting the President from granting pardons to perpetrators of political violence without first consulting the victims. Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) member Ryna Albutt appealed against the decision in the Constitutional Court after it was handed down in the North Gauteng High Court in Pretoria on 29 April 2009. According to the report, Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo, in a unanimous judgement, found that exercising the power to grant a pardon had to be rationally related to its purpose. "He held that, given the country's history, victim participation was the only rational means of contributing to national reconciliation and national unity". Reported by Natasha Marrian, 23 February 2010, Mail & Guardian at <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2010-02-23-constitutional-court-upholds-pardons-decision>

Advocate gets 7 years' imprisonment: The North Gauteng High Court has sentenced Cézanne Visser, a practicing lawyer, to seven years' imprisonment for 11 sex-related charges, including indecently assaulting two

teenage girls and soliciting a teenager to commit indecent acts, News24 reported. The Executive Director of Women and Men Against Child Abuse, Miranda Friedmann, has expressed disappointment with the judgement. "Child sexual abuse does not always receive the condemnation and punishment it should in our country, as proven by our low conviction rate on sexual offences against children," Friedmann said. SAPA, 24 February 2010, News24, at http://www.news24.com/Content/SouthAfrica/News/1059/ee20c21e06c24be8a272f3c63086c8fe/24-02-2010-07-01/Group_slams_Barbie_jail_time

PRISON CONDITIONS

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Prisoner sues the DCS for negligence: A former prisoner who was detained at Pollsmoor prison is suing the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) for negligently allowing tuberculosis to spread in the prison. Dudley Lee, 63, is claiming R 345 000 in damages from the DCS for allowing the disease to spread. It is alleged that Lee contracted TB during his four years in Pollsmoor prison. "I begged, threatened, bribed to get my medicine in time," Lee said. Reported by Karen Bretenbach, 10 February 2010, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20100210042943108C509282

A day in a female prison: A report in Health24 describes the daily routines of a typical South African prison for women in terms of the menu, the exercise for prisoners and the chances of getting a single cell. According to the report, it is said that prisoners are expected to wake up at seven o' clock when cell doors open and warders do the first roll-call for the day, followed by attending a rehabilitation programme organised for the day. At this time prisoners are expected to have cleaned their cells shower and dressed up for breakfast, Health24 reported. It is reported that this is what Advocate Cezanne Visser will face during her 7-year sentence. Reported by Leandra Engelbrecht, February 2010, Health24, <http://www.health24.com/Woman/General/711-3633-3634,40749.asp>

Prison officials say prisoner was cured: A report in The Cape Times said that former Pollsmoor awaiting-trial prisoner Dudley Lee (63) was able to stay in a hospital until he was cured of TB. According to the report, Lee is suing the state for R345 000 for allowing TB to spread through the prison. He said that he was infected in prison and his health has been damaged. Ismail Jamie SC, for the Department of Correctional Services, has introduced Lee's medical record from his time spent in the prison, thus denying the allegations that Lee was kept in normal confinement during his ailment. The report stated that Lee had spent six months in the prison's hospital section while ill with TB. Acting Judge Madeleine de Swardt raised concerns about the accuracy of the records: 'I don't know if these notes are exactly clear.' February 2010 <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=3235&fRequestedUrl=%2Findex.php%3FfArticleId%3D5347650> (The Cape Times report (subscription needed))

SECURITY AND ESCAPES

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Prisoner escape: Eight dangerous prisoners are reported to have escaped from Durban's Westville prison. According to an IOL report, Thozamile Taki, 39, and eight other awaiting trial prisoners managed to break out of their cell at the Medium A section of the prison, by sawing through the steel door and the grill gate. Taki was the last to allegedly attempt to slide down the rope when it gave way, causing him to fall from four storeys high and break his leg. Reported by Mpume Madlala, 22 February 2010, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20100222134006553C717764 see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20100222101339943C579530

Prisoner connected to fake bails: IOL reported that one of the escaped prisoners from the Westville prison is

linked to a case of fraudulent bail documentation. Simon Edward Barque, whose fraudulent bail is alleged to have cost R10 000 was to appear in the Durban High Court on charges of murder and robbery. According to the report, he was among eight awaiting-trial prisoners who broke out of Westville prison, cutting through steel doors and window bars. Reported by Tania Broughton and Kamini Padayachee, 23 February 2010, IOL at, http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20100223070355457C660051

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Prinsloo will serve 13 years in Belarus prison: According to a report in News24, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) has issued a statement that Dirk Prinsloo, will have to serve his 13-year sentence in a Belarus prison before returning to South Africa. According to the report it is not yet clear whether Prinsloo will be extradited to South Africa to serve his prison term here. However, NPA spokesperson, Mthunzi Mhaga, said "We believe the Belarus authorities will deport him shortly after serving his sentence and he will be facing the same charges that advocate Barbie (Cezanne Visser) is facing." SAPA, 3 February 2010, News24, at http://www.news24.com/Content/SouthAfrica/News/1059/ba461105ba004976a177335eea6d7824/03-02-2010-11-08/NPA_Prinsloo_to_stay_in_jail

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Mandela's prison declared a heritage site: A report in IOL said that the Victor Verster prison house from which former president Nelson Mandela was set free after being imprisoned for 27 years, has been declared a heritage site. The Chief Executive of National Heritage Council (NHC), Sonwabile Mangcotywa, said "Today the NHC recognises the site as one of the rare premium icons of the national liberation heritage". IOL reported that Mandela was transferred to the Paarl prison, now called the Drakenstein Correctional Centre, from the maximum security prison on Robben Island in 1988 in preparation for his release on February 11, 1990. SAPA, 10 February 2010, IOL at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20100210132732610C189958

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AIGERIA

Former Guantanamo Bay prisoner acquitted: A report in The Jurist said that an Algerian court has acquitted former Guantanamo Bay prisoner, Mustafa Hemlili, of charges of counterfeiting and affiliation to a militant group that is active abroad. Hemlili was released from Guantanamo, along with fellow inmate Hederbash Sufian, after six-years in prison. Sufian's trial was postponed due to poor health after his lawyers presented evidence showing that he suffers from mental trauma as a result of his treatment at the US facility. Jurist, 22 February 2010, at <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2010/02/algeria-court-acquits-former-guantanamo.php>

BURUNDI

Illegal prisons and inhumane conditions: A report in Prison Photography depicts the deplorable conditions under which prisoners live in Burundi's prisons. An interview with the photographer Nathalie Mohadjer reveals that there are unknown prisons in Burundi. Mohadjer said "International NGO does usually have no idea that the jails exist. There are detention jails all over Burundi - almost one in every small village. Also there exist detention jails that are illegal. People just get thrown in there when the police don't know what to do with them. Prisoners have not been legally recognized, which is madness." Reported by Pete Brooke, 28 February 2010, Prison Photography, at

<http://prisonphotography.wordpress.com/2010/02/28/prisons-in-africa-the-dungeon-burundi-jails-by-nathalie-mohadjer/>

ERITREA

Journalist one year in solitary confinement: An Eritrean journalist will soon complete one year in solitary confinement under appalling conditions. According to a report in Afrique en ligne, Reporters without Borders said that Yirgalem Fisseha, who is a radio journalist, has been in Srwa prison, north of the country's capital Asmara, since May 2009. Reporters without Borders said "Yirgalem Fisseha is on the point of completing a year of being held incommunicado in particularly appalling conditions. We are very concerned for her state of health and we urge the international community to react and to demand her release and the release of the 20 or so other journalists detained in Eritrea." Afrique en ligne, 20 February 2010, at

<http://www.afriquejet.com/news/africa-news/eritrean-journalist-completes-one-year-in-solitary-confinement-2010022044536.html>

GHANA

Reform for Ghana's prisons: An opinion piece in Modern Ghana said that despite its democratic achievements in recent years, Ghana's prisons desperately need reform. According to the report, the rights of prisoners are still far from realised. The author said: "But what is being experienced today is a sharp contravention of the law of the land. While a person in prisons in the US and UK can acquire a high standard of education or even earn a degree, prisoners in Ghana are not even treated to achieve simple psychological reformation. They come out the same and even worse." By Stephen Yeboah, 6 February 2010, Modern Ghana, at

<http://www.modernghana.com/news/262434/1/are-ghanas-prisons-reformation-or-slave-grounds.html>

Prisoners smear themselves with faeces: A report in MyJoy said eight prisoners of the Ashaiman police cells have refused to be transferred to the Nsawam Prison and are reported to have smeared themselves with human excreta. According to the report, the transfer of the prisoners came after two of the prisoners reportedly died due to suffocation caused by overcrowding in the cells. MyJoy, 19 February 2010, at

<http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201002/42345.asp>

KENYA

Should prisoners vote? An opinion piece in Business Daily said that Kenyan prisons have recently experienced dramatic reforms. However, these reforms are far from granting prisoners the right to vote. Politicians as well seem not to have been keen to raise the issue of prisoners' right to vote. According to the report, allowing prisoners and ex-convicts to vote, may decreasing their sense of social alienation and bring about psychological reformation. By Adv. Albert Muriuki, 8 February 2010, Business Daily at

<http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Opinion%20&%20Analysis/-/539548/857574/-/sv1909z/-/>

Prisoners receive antiretroviral drugs: A report in IRIN said that the Kenyan Prison Service has been praised for its HIV-programmes. According to the report, the programme involves the education, testing and the provision of antiretroviral drugs to HIV infected prisoners. According to the report, studies have shown that 9 percent of male prisoners interviewed admitted having sex in prison, of which 74.6 percent said it was unprotected sex. IRIN, 16 February 2010, at <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88117>

LIBYA

Lockerbie bomber still alive: According to a report in The Telegraph, Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, the Lockerbie bomber, is reported to be living in a luxury villa in Libya six months after he was released from prison on compassionate grounds because he had less than three months to live. It is alleged that Megrahi's release came after Libyan leaders warned that lucrative oil and trade deals with Britain would be cancelled if he died in prison, Telegraph reported. Reported by Andrew Alderson and Robert Mendick, 20 February 2010, The Telegraph, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/7279123/Lockerbie-bomber-Megrahi-living-in-luxury-villa-six-months-after-being-at-deaths-door.html>

Libya imprisons Swiss businessman: A BBC report said that Libya has sentenced a Swiss business man to four months in prison for violating immigration rules. It is alleged that the imprisonment is in protest to the arrest of one of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's sons in Geneva. The Swiss man, Max Goeldi, was driven from the Swiss embassy in handcuffs. He faces four months imprisonment. Libya's Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Khaled Kaim, said Goeldi was being taken to the Ain Zara prison near Tripoli, an "open prison" where he would be allowed visits. BBC, 22 February 2010, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8527995.stm>

MALI

Prisoners released in exchange for a French hostage: The government of Mali has come under strong criticism after it allegedly released four prisoners suspected to have connections with Al-Qaeda. According to a The Times Live report, two of the men are from Algeria, one from Burkina Faso and one from Mauritania. The release of the prisoners in exchange for a French hostage, Pierre Camatte, has sparked a diplomatic crisis between Mali, Algeria and Mauritania. Algiers and Nouakchott wanted to try their nationals on terrorism-related charges, Times Live reported. SAPA-AFP, 23 February 2010, Times Live, at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/africa/article323442.ece>

RWANDA

Government embarks on prison reform: The New Times reported that the Rwandan government is set to reform prisons with the objective to conform to its vision for 2020. According to the report, Minister of Internal Security, Musa Fazil Harerimana said that the plan will see the reduction of central prisons from the current 14 to seven. Harerimana said "We have in place an infrastructural plan of vision 2020 that we are going by, and this includes reducing the number of prisons," he adding that "We want to reach a time when the service will not be depending on the central government's budget." The relocation of prisons in Rwanda is aimed at increasing prisoners' productivity. Reported by Bob.c.rutarindwa, 4 February 2010, The New Times, at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14161&article=25536>

Witness receives 19 year prison sentence: According to a report in The New Times, a Gacaca court has overturned an earlier court decision to exonerate seven people, including a pastor of the Adventist Church in Nyabisindu, Muhanga district, of their genocide charges. The report said, Pastor Pedaie Ntihanabayo, and six others accused of murder are being held in Gitarama prison pending a review of their judgement. The reported added that four witnesses were sentenced to 19 years in prison for allegedly concealing information, thus contravening constitutional stipulations. Reported by Daniel Sabiiti, 9 February 2010, The New Times at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14166&article=25681>

Genocide offender sentenced to 19 years imprisonment: A report in The New Times said that a genocide offender has been sentenced to 19 years imprisonment. According to the report, Joseph Ntawangundi, an aide to presidential hopeful Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya, leader of FDU-Inkingi, a political party yet to be registered, has been sentenced to prison for his role in the 1994-genocide. Reported by Ronald Kagenza, 11 February 2010, The New Times at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14168&article=25750> see also <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14167&article=25718>

Prisoner transfer: According to a report in The New Times, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland have signed an agreement allowing for the exchange of prisoners. The British High Commissioner, Cannon Nicholas, said that "The reason behind this agreement is to have [those] prisoners serve their sentences in their countries of origin where their relatives can access them and be monitored by their governments". He added that there are currently 15 Rwandans in UK prisons. Reported by Edwin Musoni & James Karuhanga, 13 February 2010, The New Times, at <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14170&article=25840> see also

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14170&article=25853>

Court reduces prison sentence for genocide offender:

The government of Rwanda is reported to have expressed disappointment over the ruling of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), sentencing Col. Tharcisse Muvunyi to 15-years imprisonment. The New Times reported that former Rwandan military officer, Col. Tharcisse Muvunyi, had been sentenced to 25 years in prison for genocide. National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA) spokesperson, Augustine Nkusi, said that "Given the number of people who died as a result of his words, he should have been sentenced to life imprisonment". Reported by Gashegu Muramira, 13 February 2010, The New Times, at

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14170&article=25846>

Prisoners die in a vehicle accident: Two prisoners are reported to have died and several others injured when a truck transporting them from Gisenyi lost control. According to a New Times report, the prisoners were amongst the 1000 that were being transferred from the Rubavu-based Correctional Centre to Karubanda in the Southern Province in an attempt to reduce congestion. Reported by Robert Mugabe, 17 February 2010, New Times, at

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14174&article=26001> see also

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14172&article=25875>

Health experts fight the spread of HIV in prisons: Health experts in Rwanda have launched a campaign to fight the spread of HIV in prisons in that country. A report in IRIN said that the project aims at using peer educators to teach prisoners about the risk of the virus and to encourage prisoners to attend voluntary counselling and testing for HIV. Anita Asimwe, executive secretary of the National AIDS Control Commission (CNLS), said "We have adopted new measures of sensitizing people in correctional facilities as high-risk sexual behaviour in Rwandan prisons seems to be a major contributing factor to the increase in the spread of HIV". It is alleged that at Kigali Central Prison, an estimated 16.5 percent of female prisoners and 15 percent of male prisoners are HIV-positive. IRIN, 18 February 2010, at

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88152>

Prison waste poses environmental hazards: According to a report in The New Times, officials from the Rwandan Environment and Management Authorities- REMA have alleged that sewage from Ruhengeri prison poses environmental hazards as they contaminate water which ultimately drains into the Kigombe water channel. An official is reported to have said that "The water channel is highly contaminated, with sewage and the water is being consumed by those living around this source". Reported by Bonny Mukombozi, 18 February 2010, The New Times, at

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14175&article=26042>

Governor visits Ruhengeri prison: During his visit to the Ruhengeri prison, the Governor of the Northern Province, Aime Bsenibamwe, advised prisoners to be disciplined while serving their sentences. The governor told prisoners that "[their] time in prison should not be viewed as the end of life, but a preparation for the outside environment when [they are] out.". According to The New Times report, the Ruhengeri prison was constructed in 1930, and houses about 2400 prisoners. Reported by Bonny Mukombozi, 18 February 2010, The New Times, at

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14174&article=25998> see also

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=14169&article=25808>

Pastor receives life imprisonment without parole: A report in The New Times said that the Gahogo Gacaca Appeal Court has sentenced Pastor Pedaie Ntihanabayo to life imprisonment, after finding him guilty of genocide. According to the report, the Adventist pastor will never be eligible for parole. It is alleged that a lower court had earlier set the pastor and six others free earlier on the same charges. Reported by Daniel Sabiiti, 20 February 2010, The New Time, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201002200006.html>

Three journalists imprisoned: According to a News24 report, three Rwandan journalists were sentenced to imprisonment over a story alleging an extramarital affair between the mayor of Kigali and a minister. Charles Kabonero was sentenced to a year in jail, while Didas Gasana and Richard Kayigamba were both handed six-month terms. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a New York-based watchdog, has condemned the sentences. CPJ deputy director Robert Mahoney said "These prison sentences are deeply disturbing because they reveal a pattern of using criminal defamation to silence critical journalism in Rwanda". AFP, 24 February 2010, News24, at

http://www.news24.com/Content/Africa/News/965/db0b0062da8a4f509ad4ac3dfe2eb0b6/24-02-2010-12-12/3_Rwandan_journos_jailed_

SIERRA LEONE

UN officials visit prisons: A report in Standard Time Press News said that a three-man delegation from the United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Forces of the Correction System, spent some uncomfortable moments with prisoners at the Kenema State Prison against their wishes as the prisoners together with prison officers were taken by prisoners from one cell to another, one section to another for them to see the deteriorating conditions in the prison. According to the report, the head of the delegation retired Lieutenant General Orit Adato, from Israel said that the purpose of their visit to Sierra Leone was to assess Sierra Leone's prison conditions and to find out the gaps, especially in terms security. Reported by Fayia Amara Fayia, 7 February 2010, Standard Time Press, at http://standardtimespress.net/cgibin/artman/publish/article_4466.shtml

SOMALIA

Journalist flee in fear of imprisonment : A report by the Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ) said that a high number of local journalists have fled several African countries in recent years after being assaulted, threatened, or imprisoned, leaving a deep void in professional reporting. According to the report, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea ranks top in the list of countries where dozens of journalists have been forced into exile. Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and the Gambia have also lost large segments of their local press corps in the face of intimidation. The report said Radio Shabelle, is one of the hardest hit to have lost its journalists either through murder or exile. Reported by Tom Rhodes, 16 February 2010, CPJ, at <http://cpj.org/2010/02/in-african-hot-spots.php>

SUDAN

Government commits to improve prison conditions: It is reported that a joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission in the war-ravaged Darfur region and the Sudanese Government have signed an agreement to improve prison management and prisoners' living conditions. According to a UN News Centre report, the agreement is aimed at improving the training of prison personnel, improving prison facilities and promoting prisoner rehabilitation programmes. UN News Centre, 21 February 2010, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33841&Cr=darfur&Cr1=>

Death row prisoners released: President Omar al-Beshir of Sudan is reported to have officially declared the end of the Darfur crisis. Omar al-Beshir said "The crisis in Darfur is finished; the war in Darfur is over. Darfur is now at peace". News24 reported that Omar al-Beshir also announced the release of 57 members of a rebel group from prison, 50 them alleged to be on death row. The Justice Minister, Abdel Basit Sabdarat, is reported to have said that the freed prisoners represented half of the group's members in prison. He was speaking outside Kober prison on the outskirts of Khartoum. AFP, 24 February 2010, News24, at http://www.news24.com/Content/Africa/News/965/649f9fae04be4b30b4b9f843bcec34cb/24-02-2010-10-47/Bashir_Darfur_war_is_over

UGANDA

Government urged to relocate Kigo prison: Prison authorities have come under pressure to relocate Kigo prison which currently accommodates about 12,000 prisoners. According to a report in The Monitor, the Buganda Kingdom is urging the government to relocate Kigo prison which is alleged to have been delayed. The kingdom has been lenient to house the prison facility for several years without receiving rent and it is alleged that the government owes the kingdom Shs18.7 billion in rent arrears accumulated over 16 years. The Minister of Information for Mengo, Charles Peter Mayiga, said "We believe the delay to clear the outstanding debt is intentional because they want to reduce the relevance of the kingdom before the ordinary person". Reported by Robert Mwanje and Al-Mahdi Ssenkibirwa, 11 February 2010, The Monitor, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201002110141.html>

Warders to compensate prisoners for torture: A prison warder was recently dismissed and another compelled to pay compensation for an act of torture in Gulu and Jinja prisons respectively. According to a report in New

Vision, the Prisons Deputy Commissioner, Gen. James Mwanje, said "Any officer who beats or tortures [a prisoner] will be sued in his individual capacity and if found guilty of the offence, he will have to compensate the victim or be dismissed with disgrace from the Prisons Service". According to the report, the new development in the law is geared at enhancing the rights of prisoners. Reported by Steven Candia, 24 February 2010, New vision, at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/711016>

ZAMBIA

Judge worried about prison condition: According to a report in The Post, Justice Florence Lengalenga is reported to have expressed concerns about the conditions under which prisoners are detained in Zambia. According to the report, the Judge is quoted saying that "if I fail to mention the deteriorating conditions of our prisons, both in terms of infrastructure in most provinces, the quality of food, lack of beddings, and in some cases non-availability of water, such that sometimes inmates have to walk long distances to fetch water and not forgetting the congestion of most of the prisons," Justice Lengalenga said, adding that "It is disheartening to see the deplorable conditions that inmates are living in given that they are human beings too." Reported by Christopher Miti, 2 February 2010, The Post at http://www.postzambia.com/post-read_article.php?articleId=5258

Parole board to decongest prisons: The Zambian National Parole Board (ZNPB) is reported to have taken steps to decongest prisons. According to a report in The Times of Zambia, the parole board has reviewed 136 applications for parole to determine those eligible for parole. A board member, Dr. Solomon Jere, who is also Zambia Police Service Deputy Commissioner in charge of information and technology, said the parole programme would help reduce congestion and bring sanity in prisons. "The provision for the parole board has been there since 1964, but it was inactive, it is only the present Government that activated it", Jere said. Times of Zambia, 10 February 2010, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201002100497.html>

ZIMBABWE

Prison population drops: A report in The Herald said that Zimbabwe's prison population has dropped drastically from 22,500 to 13,187 within three years. It is alleged that Zimbabwe's prisons are now well below the holding capacity of 17 000, ending the chronic problem of overcrowding. According to the report, prison is alleged to be the last resort as the courts have adopted for alternatives to prison, such as the use of community service as the standard for "[minor] offences". The Herald, 1 February 2010, allAfrica.com at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201002010069.html>

Prison labour exchanged for maize: A report in ZimEye said that prisoners of the Guruve prison were being hired in exchange for maize to feed prisoners. An unnamed official reportedly said "Procedurally we are supposed to get [prisoners'] rations from Bindura Prison since we are its satellite prison, but this has not been happening for a long time. Bindura instead give us the rations after satisfying its needs, and we are left with no option but to hire out labour for food that would be consumed by [prisoners]". It is alleged that these prisoners are being hired out to ZANU-PF officials, who use the prisoners on their farms as labour. Reported by Gerald Chateta, 13 February 2010, ZimEye, at <http://www.zimeye.org/?p=13324>

Death rate drops in prisons: It is alleged that the death rate in Zimbabwe's prison has dropped by 93 percent. According to a report in New Zimbabwe, the Minister of Justice, Jessie Majome, made the statement while addressing Parliament. Majome is reported to have blamed the high death rate in the past on the country's economic hardship. Majome told Parliament that "As of 2009, we had a dark time as a country but we are encouraged to note that as of January 2010, the deaths were just seven ... a 93 percent drop in the death rate," adding that "The death rate of 2009 was also a result of the economic environment the country was facing, so the prisons were not spared." Reported by Lebo Nkatanzo, 18 February 2010, The New Zimbabwe at <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-1854-93pc%20drop%20in%20prison%20deaths/news.aspx>

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