



30 Days Dae Izinsuku

Project of the Community Law Centre

CSPRI '30 Days/Dae/Izinsuku' March 2008

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March 2008

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SENTENCING AND PAROLE

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Prisoners to be monitored electronically: The Department of Correctional Services' Chief Deputy Commissioner, Teboho Motseke, told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that the Department was

hoping to introduce general electronic monitoring of offenders in 2009/10 and that aspects of the programme were being completed. Deputy Commissioner, Jack Shilubane, said that the tagging of offenders will not only reduce overcrowding but will also encourage maximum community participation in crime prevention and rehabilitation. Mr. Shilubane said that electronic monitoring of offenders had been introduced successfully in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Reported by Sapa, 4 March 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080304130324758C927910 see also <http://www.itweb.co.za/sections/business/2008/0803111043.asp?O=FPTOP&S=IT%20in%20Government&A=ITG>

Younger offenders should be sent for correctional supervision: A Department of Correctional Services official told the Bellville Magistrates court that the three young offenders, aged between 21 and 22, who killed a homeless man, should be sent for correctional supervision and community service. The three youths were convicted of culpable homicide. The correctional officer suggested that each of the offenders should do a maximum of 16 hours community service per month at homes for the disabled. Reported on 4 March 2008, Legalbrief, at <http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20080304133836228>

ANC President hints at the possibility of a referendum on the death penalty: At a forum hosted by Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein in Johannesburg this month, when asked how he intended to deal with crime in South Africa, ANC President, Jacob Zuma, reportedly hinted at the possibility of holding a referendum on whether to bring back the death penalty in South Africa as a measure to deal with violent crime. However, the South Africa Human Rights Commission Chairperson, Jody Kollapen, said that as much as he was also concerned about the high rate of crime in South Africa, he did not believe that the death penalty was the solution. Reported by Steven Tau and Sapa, 6 March 2008, The Citizen, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=59763,1,22>

Prisoner asks court to order the Parole Board to release him on parole: Mr. Petrus Lombaard, who had served eight years of his 20-year prison sentence at Pretoria Central prison for the murder of his wife, applied to the Pretoria High Court for an order compelling the Correctional Supervision and Parole Board to release him on parole. He had earlier applied to the same board for release but his application was denied on the grounds that he had to serve more time and attend several courses, including one on anger management. In his application to the High Court, Mr. Lombaard said he had attended courses and no longer had anger problems. Judge Brian Southwood ordered the Parole Board to reconsider Lombaard's placement on parole. Reported by Zelda Venter, 11 March 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080311060422150C147373

Human Rights Commission criticises death penalty move: While addressing the Johannesburg Press Club, the Chairperson of the South Africa Human Rights Commission, Jody Kollapen, reportedly said that South Africa's suggested 'return of the death penalty would turn the Constitution into a "hollow shell".' Mr. Kollapen said that

the Human Rights Commission was strongly opposed to the death penalty and added that its mooted reintroduction raised constitutional questions and human rights issues. Reported by Sapa, 11 March 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20080311141345574C967791

Justice Minister to appeal 'presidential pardon' prisoners' decision: The Pretoria High Court granted leave to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to appeal its decision against Minister Brigitte Mabandla, ordering her to expeditiously deal with the applications of over 380 prisoners for presidential pardons. Earlier this year the Pretoria High Court ruled that the Justice Minister had failed to exercise her constitutional duties diligently over the applications for presidential pardons of over 380 political prisoners. Some of the prisoners had applied for presidential pardon more than five years ago, but had never heard from the Justice Department on the fate of their applications. The Justice Department spokesperson, Zolile Nqayi, said that they were busy with preparations to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal. Reported by Sapa, 13 March 2008, SABC News, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,165851,00.html

Parolee risks being sent back to prison if convicted of breaching parole condition: Mr. Tony Yengeni, who was on parole after serving part of his sentence for a fraud conviction, risked being sent back to prison if found guilty of driving under the influence of alcohol. However, Mr. Yengeni's lawyer, Mario Wilker, said that he would ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to withdraw the charges against his client. But Mr. Wilker did not disclose the basis upon which he would ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to withdraw the charges. Reported by Anton Ferreira, 20 March 2008, The Times, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=730703>

UNSENTENCED PRISONERS

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Awaiting-trial prisoner's lawyer unhappy with the postponement of client's trial: The lawyer representing Ms Najwa Petersen, who is awaiting-trial for the alleged murder of her husband, 'had a fiery exchange of words with Cape High Court Judge Siraj Desai when he asked for the murder trial to be postponed for two months.' Advocate Klaus von Lieres und Wilkau told the Court that he needed at least two months to prepare his client's defence but the judge said that that was too much time and that the lawyer 'should take no longer than an hour or two to peruse the docket.' The Advocate replied to the Judge that his client's docket was not a 'cowboys and crooks novel' emphasizing that if his client was to get proper legal representation, the case had to be postponed for two months. The judge postponed the trial for two months. Reported by Sapa, 4 March

2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080304054709754C248541

Awaiting - trial prisoners harass police detainees: Police detainees at the Cape Town Magistrates' Court alleged that they were being harassed by awaiting-trial prisoners whenever they were temporary held together in the Court's holding cells waiting to appear in court. The police detainees said that awaiting-trial prisoners from prisons always search them for money and force them to surrender their valuables. Mr. Gideon Morris of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons reportedly said that it was 'common knowledge that prison gangs target vulnerable people, such as first-time and young offenders' but added that his office did not have the jurisdiction to investigate what was happening to detainees in the court's holding cells. However, Captain Randall Stoffels, spokesperson for the Cape Town Central police station, denied the allegations saying that if any detainee experienced such an incident, they should report it to the police. Reported on 11 March 2008, Die Burger, at <http://152.111.1.251/argief/berigte/dieburger/2008/03/11/PQ/8/pmopcell.html>

SECURITY AND ESCAPES

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Escaped prisoner shot in the leg: Superintendent Mzukisi Fatyela said that Mr. Ndzondelelo Mafanya, one of seven prisoners held on charges of murder who escaped from Wellington Prison in the Eastern Cape on 31 August 2007, was re-arrested following a shoot-out with the police. Superintendent Fatyela added that during the arrest, Mr. Mafanya was shot in the leg and taken to hospital. Mr. Mafanya will be charged with murder, unlawful possession of a firearm, and escape from lawful custody. Reported by Sapa, 17 March 2008, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4308270> see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080317112443348C716457 see also <http://www.dispatch.co.za/article.aspx?id=183407>

Awaiting-trial prisoners escape from a police van: Police spokesperson, Superintendent Mike Fatyela, said that two awaiting-trial prisoners who were being transported to Wellington Prison escaped from a police van in Mqanduli, Eastern Cape. Explaining how the incident happened, Superintendent Fatyela said that the two prisoners removed the mesh covering the police van window and escaped through the opening. He said that the police suspected that the van had stopped at a red traffic light when the prisoners escaped. Reported by Sapa, 27 March 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080327184606330C509842

CHILDREN

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Bill could reduce the age of babies living with imprisoned mothers: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, told the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) during a debate on the Correctional Services Amendment Bill, that the age of children living with their imprisoned mothers should be reduced from five to two years. The Bill allows community organisations and religious groups to help find homes for the children elsewhere and rehabilitate their sentenced mothers to have them integrated back into society. However, such organisations have to be screened and registered with the Department of Correctional Services. Reported by Sapa, 5 March 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20080305162330670C828690

Poor communication between government departments lands children in prisons: Mr. Lukas Muntingh of Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative said that because of poor communication between the Justice Department and the Department of Correctional Services, the former sent children to prisons yet the latter did not want them there. Mr. Muntingh added that the Constitution prohibited child prisoners from coming into contact with adult offenders but that there had been few cases in the past where this had happened. Mr. Muntingh cautioned that if the current sentencing trend continued, by 2015 there would be few beds for prisoners serving longer sentences. Reported on 18 March 2008, Pretoria News, at <http://www.pretorianews.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4308609>

PRISON CONSTRUCTION

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Bids for five private prisons under evaluation: The Department of Correctional Services is evaluating bids tendered by construction firms for the construction of five private prisons. The new prisons, with a capacity of 3000 beds each, will be built in Nigel (Gauteng), Port Shepstone (KwaZulu-Natal), East London (Eastern Cape),

Klerksdorp (North West), and Allandale (Western Cape). They will be public-private partnership (PPP) prisons and will be built and managed by the private sector, on behalf of government. Reported by Irma Venter, 7 March 2008, Engineers News, at http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article.php?a_id=128654

Department and Portfolio Committee disagree on private prisons: The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services threatened to disassociate itself from the Department of Correctional Services' proposed private prisons programme with the former arguing that it was an expensive project and that the government should construct and manage the prisons itself. The Committee Chairperson, Mr. Dennis Bloem, reportedly wanted to know why the Department had opted for private prisons yet in the past the Minister of Correctional Services, Ngconde Balfour, had indicated that it was a costly exercise. However, the National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Vernie Petersen, told the Committee that private prisons were cheaper and that private prisons were better managed than government ones. Reported by Adriaan Basson, 30 March 2008, Mail and Guardian, at <http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx?articleid=335717&area=%2finsight%2finsight>

GOVERNANCE AND CORRUPTION

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Department of Correctional Services recovers 22 million rand: The National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Vernie Petersen, was pleased that the partnership between the Department of Correctional Services' Internal Investigations Unit and the Special Investigations Unit in the fight against corruption and fraudulent activities in the Department had been successful in recovering R22 million from fraudulent and corrupt transactions since April 2006. The Commissioner also added that several cases of corruption and fraud were dealt with which saved the Department a projected waste of R3,2 billion. Reported by Tshifhiwa Shonisani, 28 February 2008, The Citizen, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=59312,1,22>

Parolee not 'given ride' in a police car: The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) said that there was no evidence that the former ANC Chief Whip, Tony Yengeni, who is on trial for allegedly breaking his parole conditions, was driven in a police marked car after his brief court appearance. Mr. Yengeni was convicted of fraud and released on parole but was arrested on allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol. Police spokesperson Superintendent Andre Traut said that the car in which Mr. Yengeni was allegedly sighted belonged to the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) and that the police would not investigate the matter. Reported by Sapa, 20 March 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080320121006644C458835 see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20080321081547307C872117

Sixteen warders dismissed three years after death of a prisoner: Sixteen warders were dismissed from the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) after they were found guilty by a disciplinary tribunal in the death of Shaun Cupido (26) on 3 January 2005 at Helderstroom Prison. The DCS explained that the case took so long as there were problems with the representation of the warders. Gideon Morris of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons noted that the proposed amendments to the Correctional Services Act will require all incidents where force was used against prisoners to be reported to the Inspectorate. He said that this will facilitate closer monitoring and enable the collection of valuable data that can be used to prevent the use of excessive force. Lukas Muntingh, of the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI), remarked that the criminal cases against these warders still need to continue and lamented the fact that such incidents are not promptly investigated. He said that delays in investigations cultivate a culture of impunity. Reported by Carien Du Plessis, 18 March 2008, Die Burger, at <http://152.111.1.251/argief/berigte/dieburger/2008/03/18/SK/4/cddkdontsiaan.html>

Department of Correctional Services ordered to reinstate fired warden: The General Public Service Bargaining Council ordered the Department of Correctional Services to reinstate Mr. Mpakamiseni Ndaba to his position with immediate effect after a wrongful dismissal. Mr. Ndaba, who had worked for the Department for 20 years, had been dismissed for disclosing to the media that awaiting-trial female prisoners at Mthatha's Wellington Prison were to be transferred to Queenstown which would have made their court appearances difficult. Mr. Ndaba had also alleged that no proper consultations had been made before such transfers were approved. His allegations in the media allegedly incensed the Minister of Correctional Service, Ngconde Balfour, who promised to expel from the Department whoever made the allegations. Reported on 28 March 2008, The Dispatch, at <http://www.dispatch.co.za/article.aspx?id=186397>

PRISONERS' RIGHTS

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Correctional Services Portfolio Committee chairperson says prisoners should be stripped of privileges: Mr. Dennis Bloem, chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, reportedly said that 'the government should show no mercy to convicted criminals' and that 'their privileges, such as being allowed to have TVs in their cells, should be taken away.' Mr. Bloem reportedly added that "We are talking about cruel,

merciless, heartless monsters - monsters who rape and kill innocent and defenceless children" and that their privileges, such as watching TVs should not be elevated to the status of rights. He also reportedly said that prisoners did not respect the rights of the victims of their crime and that on that basis they have no moral ground to claim their rights. Reported by Siyabonga Mkhwanazi , 13 March 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080313062351404C705012 see also http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,165828,00.html

Life prisoners' privileges under threat: The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, said that the privileges of people serving life sentences should be taken away. Bloem was dissatisfied with the number of telephone calls prisoners were allowed to make, the number of visits allowed and access to television. Lukas Muntingh of the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) responded by saying that removing or further restricting access to these amenities would be regressive. He said that the prison environment should work towards normalisation and not create completely abnormal environments in prisons where people are cut off from society. Reported by Pilda Essop, 15 March 2008, Die Burger, at <http://152.111.1.251/argief/berigte/dieburger/2008/03/15/SK/2/polvoorregte.html>

Prisoners living luxuriously according to PSA: The Chairperson of Public Servants Association (PSA), Pierre Snyman, reportedly told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that prisoners had 'many many privileges, including luxurious rooms.' Mr. Snyman said that some communities near prisons said that prisons were like hotels. The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services said that some prisoners thought that they had more rights than prison officials. Mr. Bloem said that TVs in prisons should be withdrawn and taken to hospitals so that prisoners stop leading a luxurious life. Mr. Bloem also said that telephone services in prisons allow prisoners to communicate with their fellow criminals on the outside which created a security risk for the country. Reported by Sapa, 18 March 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20080318134211287C408838

1000s of prisoners sitting idle says Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons: Mr. Gideon Morris of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons reportedly told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that 1000s of prisoners were sitting idle instead of participating in various activities in prisons workshops. Mr. Morris added that if prisoners did not participate in activities, such as cultivating their own food, the cost of their detention will increase as the Department of Correctional Services would be required to buy food that could have been cultivated by prisoners. Mr. Morris recommended that if the Department of Correctional Services wanted to achieve self-sufficiency, it would have to, amongst other things, set up prison farms, prison industries and prison factories. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 19 March 2008, Business Day, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200803190390.html>

Man spends 5 years in prison after winning appeal: Mr. Jonathan Zealand, who won an appeal against his conviction on charges of murder and the unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition, remained in detention in a maximum security prison from 1999 to 2004 because the registrar of the Grahamstown High Court did not inform St Alban's Prison in Port Elizabeth that Mr. Zealand had been acquitted. Mr. Zealand's case attracted the attention of the South Africa Human Rights Commission which said that 'something went drastically wrong' and 'called for a proper inquiry into the South African criminal justice system.' Mr. Denzil van Zyl of the Human Rights Commission said that if a proper inquiry was not carried out into the criminal justice system, there was no guarantee that such an incident would not be repeated. Reported on 18 March 2008, SABC News, at <http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=41573>

CSPRI refutes claims that prisoners are living in luxury: In its press release reacting to the claims that prisoners were living luxuriously, the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative said that such claims were 'misleading, dangerous and factually incorrect.' CSPRI added that 'the conditions under which prisoners were detained in South Africa left much to be desired. In many regards they fall short of what is accepted as humane.' CSPRI said that there was no evidence that prisoners were living in luxurious rooms and added that under the Constitution prisoners must be detained in humane conditions. Reported by Sapa, 19 March 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20080319165429512C477652 see also http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,166173,00.html

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Families of warders who die on duty to be compensated: The National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr. Vernie Petersen, told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that the Department of Correctional Services was to compensate the family members of a prison warder who died in the line of duty, to the value of R200 000. He, however, said that the compensation would not be retrospective and that only family members of warders who died after 1 April 2008 would be eligible for compensation. The spokesperson of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), Benzi kaSoko, welcomed the move saying that their members were working under dangerous conditions and many had been killed by prison gangs. Reported by Siyabonga Mkhwanazi , 12 March 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=vn20080312055329267C768011

Former prison island deserted: Residents of Robben Island in Cape Town, where many South African political prisoners who fought against the apartheid government were detained, started deserting the island saying that it was not longer suitable for human habitation. They claimed that the money the government made available for maintaining the island was insufficient and as a result essential services were no longer provided for on the island. Robben Island is now a world heritage site. Reported on 15 March 2008, AFP, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iJLAMdiQ101IB5EnLyOunOYTqpHg>

Prisoner says crime 'doesn't pay': Mr. Mziwonke Sokopo, a 22-year-old inmate serving a 21-year prison sentence for rape and robbery at Mdantsane Prison, in what the media described as 'a moving speech' told participants at the Jazz Against Crime Festival, that crime does not pay. Participants at the festival included the youth, government officials and senior citizens. The money that was raised from the festival was donated to local Community Police Forums to boost them in their fight against crime. Reported by Lindile Sifile, 17 March 2008, Dispatch on Line, at <http://www.dispatch.co.za/article.aspx?id=183340>

Mozambican prisoner's extradition sought: Senior Mozambican police officers were in South Africa to negotiate the extradition of a woman believed to be a child sex slave trafficker. The Mozambican press said that the woman, whose name was not disclosed, was serving a prison sentence in South Africa. She was wanted in Mozambique to stand trial on the charges of entrapment, kidnapping and the falsification of documents. Investigations against the woman started after two 16-year old Mozambican girls were rescued from a brothel in Moreleta Park, Pretoria, by a Mozambican lawyer living in South Africa who was disguised as a client at the brothel. Reported by Sapa, 26 March 2008, The Dispatch, at <http://www.dispatch.co.za/article.aspx?id=186410>

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Egypt

High profile prisoner petitions president for release on medical grounds: The lawyer of Egypt's opposition leader, Ayman Nur, who is an insulin-dependent diabetic, said that he had petitioned the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, for the release of his client on medical grounds. Mr. Nur is serving a five-year prison term for forging affidavits needed to set up his political party. Mr. Nur's lawyer, Amir Salem, made the statement after the High Court rejected Mr. Nur's application to be released on medical grounds. Reported on 17 March 2008, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=85&art_id=nw20080317133719288C834345

Kenya

50% of Nairobi's inmates suffering from TB and HIV: While speaking at the Nairobi Area Remand Prison during the World TB Day, the Director of Prison Medical Services, Dr John Kibosia, said that more than half of prisoners in Nairobi were suffering from TB and HIV. He said that between 40-50% of the 5000 inmates in Nairobi prisons were infected with TB and HIV. Dr Kibosia blamed the widespread of the two diseases in Nairobi's prisons on the lack of facilities such as laboratories, equipment for testing and diagnosis, and medical personnel who would quickly detect cases and refer to hospitals. Reported by Henry Neondo, 27 March 2008, Africa Science News Service, at

http://africasciencenews.org/asns/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=246&Itemid=1

Eritrea

US report decries torture and appalling prison conditions: In its report, the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, alleged that many prisoners were being subjected to torture and that the prison conditions in Eritrea left a lot to be desired. The organisation also alleged that many torture victims died in custody and most prominent people who were arrested in 2001 had been detained in solitary confinement. However, the Eritrean Foreign Ministry issued a statement in which it reportedly said that the report was 'politically motivated and replete, as has indeed been the case in the previous years, with unsubstantiated rumours, innuendo, exaggerations and sheer fabrications.' Reported on 24 March 2008, Irinnews, at

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77420>

Uganda

Prisoners know how to deal with HIV treatment: A researcher, Glenna Gordon, who visited two prisons, one in a rural area and another in town, found that prisoners who were HIV-positive took their medication on time and knew how to deal with the disease. Gordon said that at the rural prison, prisoners knew how HIV was transmitted and the one on treatment took her medication on time. She also established that in the town prison, HIV-positive prisoners formed a peer support group which helped them deal with some of the challenges associated with the disease and that the prison authorities were supportive. Opinion by Glenna Gordon, 9 March 2008, The Monitor, at

http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/insights/Living_with_HIV_in_Uganda_s_prison_cells.shtml

Prisons chief says prisoners should have conjugal visits: The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr.

Johnson Byabasaiaja, while speaking at a two-day National Prisons Reform Conference, reportedly said that if private rooms were available in prisons he did not see any reason why prisoners should be denied conjugal rights. Dr. Byabasaiaja said that the new Prisons Act protected prisoners' rights including their right to conjugal visits. He said that prisons in Uganda had been improved to handle high profile prisoners, including warlords. Reported by Solomon Muyita , 18 March 2008, The Monitor, at http://www.monitor.co.ug/artman/publish/news/Prison_boss_pushes_for_conjugal_visits_for_inmates.shtml

Zimbabwe

Prisons boss vows to take up arms should Mugabe lose the elections: The head of the Zimbabwe Prisons Services, Paradzayi Zimondi, reportedly said that President Mugabe must win the presidential election and that if he lost to the opposition, he would never salute the winner. Mr. Zimondi also reportedly said that if the opposition won, 'he would lock himself away at his farm and take up arms to defend his land, which he believes will be threatened under a new government.' Reported by Rangarirai Mberi, 20 March 2008, Financial Gazette, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200803200725.html> see also <http://www.dispatch.co.za/article.aspx?id=183156>

Ghana

Inmates to participate in educational programmes: The Kumasi Central Prison initiated a comprehensive educational programme in the prison yard to enable its Junior High School and Senior High School student-inmates to continue with their education while serving their sentences. The move was aimed at rehabilitating and reintegrating inmates. Mr. Ambrose Imoro Salifu, Ashanti Regional Commander, told journalists that under the programme arrangements would be made for students to write national and regional examinations. Mr. Imoro added that informal education would also be introduced for the inmates who lacked a formal education background. He said that funding for the programme would be provided by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ghana Prisons Service. Reported on 28 March 2008, Modern Ghana, at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/161282/1/Kumasi-prisons-initiates-educational-programme-for-student-in>

Equatorial Guinea

Prisoner talks to international media: Former British army officer Simon Mann who is awaiting-trial in Equatorial Guinea for allegedly attempting to overthrow the Equatorial Guinea government told Britain's Channel 4 News that he was sorry for the attempted coup. Mann who was reportedly shackled during the interview, alleged that the Spanish and South African governments had supported his attempted coup. Reported by Sapa-AP, 12 March 2008, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=4300192>

Sierra Leone

UN trains prisons monitors: Human rights officers with the United Nations Peace Mission in Sierra Leone held a three-day training programme to improve the standard of monitoring prison conditions across the country. In a press release, the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) said that officers from the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission, non-governmental organisations and independent rights monitors were to benefit from the training programme. UNIOSIL emphasised that the protection of prisoners' rights was one of the essential preconditions to durable peace in Sierra Leone. Reported on 26 February 2008, UN News Centre, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25764>

More than half of the prisoners allegedly awaiting sentence: Prison Watch, a human rights group in Sierra Leone, said that many inmates in Sierra Leone's prisons were awaiting-trial and that 698 of the 1,899 prisoners in Sierra Leone jails at the end of September 2007 were remanded in custody without a formal sentence, while 321 others were awaiting trial. Prison Watch representative, Namsana Coker, said that some prisoners had spent over four years in prison awaiting-trial. The Human Rights and Rule of Law officer at Sierra Leone's U.N. Integrated Office, Benedict Sannoh, attributed the presence of such a high number of prisoners awaiting-trial to excessive long remands and frequent adjournments. Reported 4 March 2008, Daily India, at <http://www.dailyindia.com/show/221812.php/Most-Sierra-Leone-prisoners-not-se> see also <http://www.politicalgateway.com/news/read/134561>

Botswana

South African sentenced to death: The Botswana High Court sentenced Mr. Michael Molefe, a South African, and his Botswana co-accused, Kgotsi Sampson, to death for the murder of two Zimbabweans. The prisoners were brought to court in leg irons to hear their sentence. Judge Maruping Dibotelo held that the two had shown no extenuating circumstances and deserved the death penalty. He told them that they had six weeks within which to appeal against their conviction and sentence. Their lawyer said that he would appeal the sentence and the conviction because there were many issues 'which were a gross misdirection of justice.' Reported by Baldwin Ndaba, 8 March 2008, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20080308081159880C410397

Death row inmates should be executed to decongest prisons, chief says: Batlokwa Deputy Chief, Michael Gaborone, said that anyone found guilty of murder should be executed if potential criminals are to be deterred in Botswana. He said that the right to life of murderers was not more important than that of their victims. He reportedly added 'that keeping a murder convict in jail for the rest of his life is costly to the taxpayer and in any case prisons are congested.' He cited South Africa as an example of a country which abolished the death penalty

with the result that people are not enjoying their freedom because of crime. Pastor Biggie Butale of the End Time Ministries did not agree with Gaborone arguing that some criminals should be given a chance to repent. However, Pastor Butale said that child molesters should hang. Reported by Bame Piet, The Reporter, 17 March 2008, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200803172047.html>

Tanzania

European countries agree to imprison genocide convicts: Sweden and France were reportedly ready to imprison some offenders convicted of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Sweden consented to detaining three prisoners -former vice president of the Interahamwe militia, George Rutaganda, the former minister of information, Eliezer Niyitegeka, and the former mayor of Bicumbi, Laurent Semanza. France said that it would detain the former mayor of Mukingo, Juvenal Kajelijeli. However, the government of Rwanda reportedly told the Tribunal that the prisoners should be transferred to Rwanda, a move which the prisoners opposed. Reported on 8 March 2008, The Citizen, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200803080020.html>

Nigeria

300 children allegedly in prison with their mothers: The Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice reportedly said that there were 300 children in Nigeria's prisons, many of them born when their mothers were already in custody and some imprisoned along with their mothers. However, the prison authorities allegedly denied the figure; claiming only 19 children were in prison with their mothers. The Programmes Officer of Access to Justice, Leonard Dibia, said that if the Nigeria Government was committed to its international human rights obligations, it would put in place measures to ensure that the number of children detained with their mothers was reduced and that there were humane conditions in prisons. Opinion by Leonard Dibia, 10 March 2008, This Day, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200803110366.html>

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