



30 Days Dae Izinsuku

Project of the Community Law Centre

"30 Days/Dae/Izinsuku" September 2007

"30 Days/Dae/Izinsuku"
September 2007

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HEALTH CARE

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Prison turns away doctor because it allegedly has enough doctors: Dr Paul Theron, who blew the whistle on health conditions at Pollsmoor prison to the Inspecting Judge of Prisons, tried to return to work at the prison when his suspension was lifted by order of the Cape Labour Court. However, the Department of Correctional Services allegedly told him that they had enough doctors at the prison and did not need any more doctors. The Department of Correctional Services told him that should doctors be required, they intend to employ their own instead of using those hired by the Department of Health, Dr. Theron being one of them. Dr. Theron's lawyers have taken up the matter with the Department of Correctional Services. Reported by Fatima Schroeder, 18 September 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=125&art_id=vn20070918034253773C723262

Doctor takes the Correctional Services to Court: Dr Paul Theron, who was suspended after speaking to the Inspecting Judge of Prisons about the health conditions at Pollsmoor Prison, is to take both the Departments of Correctional Services and Health to the Labour Court over his suspension. His argument is that his actions were protected under the Protected Disclosures Act because he made his submission to Judge Erasmus in good faith and with the aim of improving healthcare at Pollsmoor. Reported by Fatima Schroeder, 25 September 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070925034325927C609525

Prisoners pledge to fight HIV/AIDS outside prison: Some prisoners who are soon to be released from the Westville Medium C prison in Durban pledged to do what was within their means to fight HIV/AIDS in their communities. The prisoners who will be released before Christmas took part in an event hosted by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) at the prison to raise awareness about crime and HIV/AIDS. The inmates participated in various information activities on HIV/AIDS. One of the inmates, Edward Mgobhozi who was arrested 11 years ago, said that he wants to use his awareness about the pandemic to teach those in the community. Reported by Sne Masuku, 27 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=573068>

Departments taken to court over steaming toilet: Mr. Augustino Banze (36), who was a prisoner at the Pretoria Central Prison in 2004, has taken the Departments of Correctional Services and Public Works to court over the injuries he sustained while using a toilet at the prison. In papers filed before the Pretoria High Court, Mr. Banze, who had lost the use of his legs after being short by the police, told the court that while he was flushing the toilet, steam and hot water rose from the toilet, causing him severe burns. Both Departments are challenging his allegations. Reported by Sapa, 30 August 2007, Mail & Guardian, at http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=317882&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national

Prisoner to be moved from prison to a police cell because of drugs: Pretoria-based businessman, Charles Modise will be transferred from the Kimberley Prison to the Transvaal Road police holding cells because the constant smoking of dagga by fellow prisoners is affecting his health. Modise's legal representative, Sello Leballo, said that inmates at Kimberley Prison, where Modise had been kept for a week, were constantly smoking dagga and aggravate his asthma and sinusitis. Reported by Sandi Kwon Hoo, 14 September 2007, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/?fSectionId=3530&fArticleId=vn20070914033612155C710679> see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070914033612155C710679

Prison officials allegedly set dogs on inmates: Racial and religious tensions brewed between Christian and Muslim inmates at Durban's Westville Prison after prison officials allegedly set dogs on 50 African inmates who refused to vacate their cell for Muslim inmates. The Muslims wanted to use the cell as a place of prayer during the month of Ramadan. One of the 50 prisoners said that they refused to vacate the cell because they felt that Muslim inmates were given preferential treatment, and they believed that it was unconstitutional as all prisoners should be treated equally. Reported by Canaan Mdletshe, 18 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=566552>

Legal Aid Board responsible for man spending unnecessary time in prison: The Legal Aid Board was criticised by the Supreme Court of Appeal for not discharging its duties in the case of a prisoner whose appeal process began in 2003. The prisoner had been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by the High Court for the offence of rape but the Supreme Court of Appeal had reduced the sentence to three years. As the prisoner had been in prison for five years already, the Court also ordered that he be released from prison immediately. But the man was not released until recently and the Supreme Court of Appeal said that the delays had resulted in the appellant serving an unjustifiably excessive time in prison. Reported by Ernest Mabuza, 25 September 2007, Business Day, at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A571332>

Suspect allegedly tortured in prison: Lebogang Nicholas Ranyali, 23, who is believed to be South Africa's most wanted ATM bomber, while applying for bail, told a Durban Magistrate that he had been tortured in Durban and at holding cells in Johannesburg. Ranyali chose to stand throughout the bail application and when asked by the Magistrate why he wanted to stand, Ranyali said his back was sore because of the torture, making it uncomfortable to sit on the wooden bench. He showed the court his hands, which had several bruises, and said he had been abused by police and denied medical attention. The Magistrate ordered that Ranyali be kept in isolation at Westville Prison and that he receive immediate medical attention. Reported by Sharlene Packree, 26 September 2007, Daily News, at

<http://www.dailynews.co.za/?fSectionId=&fArticleId=vn20070926094414724C155737> also see

<http://www.themercury.co.za/?fSectionId=&fArticleId=vn20070926094414724C155737>

Police officers' killers should not be granted parole: Mr. Dennis Bloem, the chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services said that people who kill police officers should not be given parole. He was reacting to the killing of a police officer in Cape Town. Bloem said that people who kill police officers are clearly challenging the law, and should not be considered for parole not until they have served lengthy prison sentences. Reported by Sabcnews, 27 September 2007, at

http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,156505,00.html

Committee concerned over Minister's proposals on parole: The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services expressed concern over a controversial proposal in the Correctional Services Amendment Bill that would give the Minister of Correctional Services the discretion to determine the period a prisoner serving a life sentence should serve before being considered for parole. The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Mr. Dennis Bloem, reportedly said "We don't agree with the proposal... we don't know what their intention is with the change. They have not convinced us." Officials of the Department of Correctional Services said that the intention of the proposal "was not to reduce the imprisonment period, but to provide a 'proper framework' for dealing with parole for offenders sentenced to life imprisonment." Reported by Sapa, 31 August 2007, IOL at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070831125643123C641046

Committee member proposes that parolees should not drink alcohol: Democratic Alliance Member of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. James Selfe, said that the proposed amendment to the Correctional Services Act to allow a prisoner on parole to consume alcohol should be rejected. Mr. Selfe reportedly said that 'there is a huge correlation between alcohol abuse and the perpetration of crime. Anyone who is on parole or serving a sentence of community corrections should not be allowed to use alcohol at all.' Reported by Deon de Lange, 2 September 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070902083819694C748816

CSPRI criticises proposed amendments to the Correctional Services Act: While making oral submissions on the Correctional Services Amendment Bill, Mr. Lukas Muntingh, Coordinator Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative, told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that if the Correctional Services Act were amended to allow the Minister of Correctional Services to determine the time a prisoner should spend in prison before being considered for parole, this would undermine the principle of

separation of powers. Muntingh told the Committee that 'this clearly undermines the intentions of the sentencing court, but more importantly it has a substantial impact on the separation of powers between the judiciary and the executive. Courts and offenders need to have a predictable certainty that a sentence of imprisonment of a particular length has a specific and steadfast meaning, and that it does not have different meanings from one day to the next depending on what the Minister may opine.' Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 5 September 2007, Business Day, at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A556189>

Minister abandons controversial proposed amendments: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, withdrew the controversial proposals in the Correctional Services Amendment Bill that would have given him, amongst other things, discretionary powers to reduce the sentences of dangerous criminals. Correctional Services Commissioner, Vernie Peterson, told the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services that the revised Bill would be tabled soon. The revised Bill would compel the Minister to consult widely, including the National Council on Correctional Services, before shortening sentences. Reported by Mpumelelo Mkhabela, 9 September 2007, The Times, at

<http://www.suntimes.co.za/PrintEdition/News/Article.aspx?id=559997> see also

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070909102054190C238806

Bill to give Regional Courts power to impose life sentences: The National Assembly approved the Criminal Law (Sentencing) Amendment Bill which, amongst other things, empowers Regional Courts to impose life sentences. Justice and Constitutional Development Minister, Brigitte Mabandla, said that this Bill was vital because cases often had to be transferred from the Regional Courts to the High Courts for sentencing and that this led to delays and sometimes duplication, as well as the fact that vulnerable victims were often required to repeat their testimony which could be seen as a form of secondary victimisation. Reported by Sapa, 20 September 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070920171139632C826349

PRISON POPULATION

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Number of children awaiting trial drops: According to the most recently available figures, the number of children awaiting trial in prison dropped from a high of 2,934 in 1999 to 1,238 in 2005. Efforts to divert child offenders from the formal criminal justice system have also been successful but more needed to be done and children who have been found to have broken the law, need to participate in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Ann Skelton of the Child Law Project reportedly said that about 10 percent of children who are arrested are currently diverted into rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and that the proportion should be higher. Reported by Taipei Times, 1 September 2007, at <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/world/archives/2007/09/01/2003376753>

Over 250 foreign nationals in South African prisons: While replying to a question in Parliament, Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, said 253 foreigners were in South African prisons by late September this year. He added that of the 253, 143 were Zimbabweans serving sentences for robbery with aggravating circumstances, such as armed robbery. He said that of the 129 foreign nationals imprisoned in 2005 for aggravating robbery, 74 were Zimbabweans, 36 Mozambicans, six Nigerians, and four Tanzanians. Three were Lesotho nationals, and one each from Angola, Cameroon, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Swaziland. Reported by Sapa, 20 September 2007, Citizen, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=48445,1,22>

REHABILITATION

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Prisoners have to pay for their education: While attending a graduation ceremony at which one prisoner, Mr. Moses Taunyane, graduated with distinctions in his music course completed by

correspondence through the University of South Africa, spokesman for the Department of Correctional Services, Patrick Thobejane, said that prisoners have to pay for their studies but that the Department assists them by providing special cells for studying, posting their assignments and assisting with their administrative tasks. Reported by Namhla Tshisela, 20 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=568285>

Youthful prisoners to benefit from tournament: Duma Nkosi, the mayor of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality said that the municipality is using their golf day tournament to raise funds for soccer development as a legacy project for the 2010 World Cup. Nkosi said that the municipality will use the money raised during the tournament to buy balls that are distributed to various groups in the area. He also said that the municipality uses the project to encourage the youth to take part in recreational activities with the emphasis in this case on soccer. He added that they had 'also partnered with the Department of Correctional Services because there are youth who are languishing in jails.' Reported by Ramatsiyi Moholola, 26 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/Sport/SoccerZone/Article.aspx?id=571912>

Inmates benefiting from education programmes: The Department of Correctional Services Department offers various educational and rehabilitation programmes countrywide and many prisoners are participating in such programmes to acquire various skills. This means that prisons should no longer be seen as places for breeding criminals but rather as places that promote social responsibility. Opinion expressed by Tshifhiwa Magadani, 26 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/Feedback/Article.aspx?id=571946>

Prisoner given a wheelchair: Ms. Leeah Mthembu, who is serving a prison sentence for the murder of her husband, was given a new wheelchair by the Sexwale Family Foundation after the one she was using became unusable. Ms Mthembu said that she was very thankful for the wheelchair and she hoped that it will continue to help her even when her time in jail is up. Reported by Prince Morare, 26 September 2007, The Times, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=571979>

Prisoners escaped from Mthatha prison: Superintendent Mzukisi Fatyela of Eastern Cape police said that seven awaiting-trial prisoners escaped from Wellington prison in Mthatha. The prisoners allegedly escaped by sawing through two burglar bars in their cell. They were between the ages of 18 and 36 and they are considered to be dangerous. The Department of Correctional Services reported to the police a case of escape from unlawful custody. Reported by Sapa, 1 September 2007, IOL at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070901141414102C959557

Minister promises tough action over prison escapes: The escape of seven dangerous awaiting-trial prisoners from Wellington Medium Correctional Centre in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, made Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, furious and promised that 'heads will roll after' over that escape. The Minister promised to take serious action. Reported by Sapa, 3 September 2007, The Times, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=554674> see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070902222955859C661133

Seventeen officials suspended over prison escapes: Seventeen prison officials were suspended from duty after 10 prisoners escaped from Empangeni's Qalakabusha Correctional Centre in August. Manelisi Wolela, the spokesperson for the Department of Correctional Services said that 'a report into the circumstances of the escape had been completed and sent to the Department's management, which would deal with it swiftly.' Reported by Chris Jenkins, 4 September 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070904053623384C949006 see also <http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=555581>

Prisoners escaped under the eyes of guards: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, said that swift action was to be taken against warders responsible for the escape of seven awaiting-trial

prisoners from a prison in Mthatha. The Minister told Parliament that the prisoners escaped under the eyes of guards in the watchtowers. Some of the prisoners had previously escaped from the same prison, using the same methods (sawing through burglar bars). Reported by Sabcnews, 4 September 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,155257,00.html

Minister says prison escapes may have been an inside job: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, told Parliament a task team was investigating what had happened and trying to determine which officers were on duty at the time when the seven prisoners escaped from Wellington prison in Mthatha. Balfour said that Wellington prison was one of the prisons in the country that had been upgraded with security fences, electric fences and CCTV cameras. He suggested the escapees might have had inside help. Reported by Sapa, 5 September 2007, Citizen, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=47170,1,22>

Two of the seven prison escapees arrested and one shot dead: Superintendent Mzukisi Fatyela of the Eastern Cape police said that two of the seven awaiting-trial prisoners who escaped from Wellington prison in Mthatha, were arrested and were to appear in court the next day. He also said that the third escapee was shot dead during the arrest. The arrested prisoners were to appear in court on the charge of escaping from lawful custody. Reported by Sabcnes, 13 September 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,155774,00.html see also <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=48534,1,22>

Police deploy heavily armed police to prevent prisoners from escaping: Heavily armed, plain-clothed Vaal Rand police, including snipers, secured the Vereeniging Magistrate's Court after a tip-off that six Chinese nationals due to appear would be assisted to escape from custody. Police were also informed that there were plans to hijack the vehicle transporting the group from the prison where the five men were being held. The Chinese nationals are accused of violating the immigration law and dealing in drugs. Reported by Ntwaagae Seleka, 13 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=563076>

Officer expelled over prison escapes: Police spokesperson, Mzukisi Fatyela, said that Mthatha police

authorities expelled an officer after a disciplinary hearing found that he had helped seven awaiting-trial prisoners to escape from the Central police station. The hearing established that the officer gave two of the suspects, believed to be his friends, the means to escape. Five others used the opportunity to also escape. Reported by Sabcnews 19 September 2007, at

http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,156093,00.html

Four of the 10 escapees arrested and one shot dead: Captain Zamukulungisa Jozana of Eastern Cape police said that one of the escaped prisoners was shot dead while four others were re-arrested. He also said that 'when police surrounded the home, the men came out and began firing shots at the police. Police returned fire and one man was shot dead.' The prisoners were expected to appear at the Engcobo Magistrate's Court the following day on charges of murder, armed robbery, escaping from lawful custody and possession of unlicensed firearms. Reported by Sapa, 20 September 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070920133457667C392382

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Professor calls for the abolition of prison system: Angela Davis, professor in History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz, who was in South Africa to attend a conference on punishment and incarceration organised by the Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research (WISER) from 29-30 August 2007 said that the prison system is far from curbing the crime rate. It is rather a major moneymaking institution. She reportedly said that 'the prisons, their architecture, their technologies, their regimes, the commodities their populations consume and produce, and the rhetoric that legitimates their proliferation, all travel from the US to the rest of the world. Why does a country like South Africa, which is in the process, we hope, of building a just society -- a non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic society -- need the repressive technologies of the super-maximum prison?' Reported by

Shaun de Waal, 31 August 2007, Mail & Guardian, at

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=318011&area=/insight/insight__national/

Prison officer shot dead by a police constable: Police spokesperson, Inspector Paul Ramaloko, said that a 33-year-old police constable shot a female prison official dead and then turned the gun on himself at Baviaanspoort Prison, east of Pretoria. It was alleged that the love relationship between the police officer and his girlfriend, who worked at the prison, had soured, and she had informed security at the prison not to let him in anymore. The police officer jumped over the fence to gain entry into the prison, where he waited for her to finish work and shot her dead while she was walking to the prison single quarters. Reported by Sapa, 20 September 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070920095035679C108834 see also <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=48524,1,22>

Remains exhumed in prison reburied: Remains that were exhumed at the Fort Glamorgan Prison in July 2007 were reburied at the Cambridge cemetery on 20 September 2007. The identity of the persons whose remains were found is not known but the team which exhumed the graves believe they might be those of prisoners buried in the 1930s at the historic Fort Glamorgan Prison. Reported by Luyanda Makapela, 21 September 2007, the Daily Dispatch, at

<http://www.dispatch.co.za/2007/09/21/Easterncape/cam.html>

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Angola

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention laments appalling prisons condition: The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visited Angola from 17 to 27 September 2007 and concluded that

prisons conditions in that country leave a lot to be desired. The prisons are overcrowded, female detainees sexually abused, child offenders detained with adults, the medical facilities are nearly non-existent, torture is rampant, corruption is the order of the day and starvation is common-place. The Working Group was also denied access to military prisons and other detention facilities. It, however, commended Angola for inviting it and for the measures put in place to rebuild the criminal justice system after many years of a civil war. Press release by Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, 27 September 2007, at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EVOD-77GCNW?OpenDocument>

Egypt

Man fears torture if deported to Egypt: Sameh Khouzam, an Egyptian murder suspect fears that should he be deported by the United States to Egypt he will be tortured by the Egyptian authorities. However, the US government argues that detainees such as Sameh Khouzam can be sent back to Egypt without the risk of further torture because the Egyptian government through 'diplomatic assurances' assured the US that Khouzam will not be tortured. Human rights organisations in the US are opposed to Khouzam's deportation, arguing that Egypt has a record of torturing detainees and should the US deport Khouzam, it would have violated its international human rights obligations under the Convention against Torture. Reported by Jon Hurdle, 30 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=85&art_id=nw20070830195504211C926713

Nigeria

Two inmates killed and 20 injured in an attempted escape: Baba Mohammed, Kano police spokesman, told the media that at least two prison inmates were killed and 20 injured in the northern Nigerian city of Kano following violent clashes with warders and police over a foiled escape. Rabiou Musa, a nurse at Kano general hospital, said that they had received 20 inmates from the central prison who were being treated for various injuries. Reported by AFP, 1 September 2007, at <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=553578> see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709040970.html>

Robbers attack prison to facilitate escape: A gang of suspected armed robbers allegedly attempted to free some of the prisoners at Kano Central Prison and as a result two inmates were shot dead. The victims were killed during a gun battle between prison warders and the armed robbers. An eyewitness said that the gang numbering up to twenty and armed with sophisticated guns, exchanged fire with prison warders for over twenty minutes the mobile policemen were drafted to assist them. None of the gang members were killed. Reported by Tina Anthony, Vanguard, 2 September 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709020023.html>

No prisoner escaped from the attempted prison break: Alhaji Muhammad Habeeb Ilyasu, Kano State Comptroller of the Nigeria Prison Service, told a press conference that investigations conducted by the prison authorities after the incident indicated that the total of 1277 inmates detained in the state central prison were still there. Alhaji Muhammad Habeeb Ilyasu said that two inmates were killed during the attempted escape and three prison warders attached to the central prison were hospitalised due to injuries they sustained while controlling the aggrieved prisoners. He denied allegations that the prison had been attacked by a gang of robbers. He added that prisoners' psychological tension caused the incident because '70% of the 950 inmates who staged the protest are awaiting trial men who have spent over eight years in the prison without trial.' Reported by Yusha'u Adamu Ibrahim, 4 September 2007, Daily Trust, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709041188.html>

Eleven prisoners shot dead in attempted escape: Sources at the University College Hospital said that eleven prisoners' bodies were brought to the mortuary after a bloody confrontation between prisoners at Agodi Federal Prisons, Ibadan and warders who wanted to take a head count of inmates in the awaiting-trial cell. However, the State Comptroller of Prisons, Mrs. Muareen Omeili, and Oyo State Commissioner of Police, Prince Udom Ekpoudom, said that eight inmates were killed while 18 others sustained gunshots injuries while trying to escape from prison. Eight prison warders were also injured. When the journalist visited the prison after the incident, there were allegedly blood stains, spent tear-gas canisters, knives, spades, bags of beans, plates, padlocks, drugs strewn all over the place. Reported by Tunde Sanni, 12 September 2007, This Day, at <http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=89078> see also

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200709120024.html>

Journalist beaten covering prison riot: Tope Abiola, the deputy editor of the privately-owned Nigeria Tribune daily newspaper, was beaten unconscious by prison guards and police at Agadi prison in Ibadan while trying to cover the aftermath of a riot by inmates. After the prison riot in which allegedly 40 inmates were killed, the Oyo Comptroller of Prisons, Maureen Omeili, ordered that no journalists would be allowed to visit the scene of the riot because it was an internal matter that did not concern the press. Tope Abiola did not heed and as a result was assaulted. Press release Reporters without Borders, 14 September 2007, at by

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200709140800.html>

Human Rights Commission condemns killing of inmates: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), while on a fact-finding mission at Agodi Federal Prison, Ibadan, the venue of a failed prison escape, condemned the killing of 11 inmates by the warders and mobile policemen. Mrs Kehinde Ajoni, the Executive Secretary of the Commission said that security forces should refrain from using maximum force when quelling any uprising. They should "learn to maim and not to kill". Reported by Tunde Sanni, 18 September 2007, This Day, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200709180517.html>

Governor concerned about overcrowding in prisons: Alh. Ibrahim Shehu Shema, Katsina State Governor, called on respective Attorneys General of the States to initiate a move aimed at, amongst other things, decongesting prisons in the country. Governor Shema said he was concerned about the overcrowding in prisons across the country, especially in cases where prisoners are awaiting-trial. He recommended those prisoners who have been awaiting-trial for long should be pardoned. Reported by NAN, 24 September 2007, Daily Trust, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709241041.html>

Comptroller General says that prison system is now more reformative: Controller-General of Prisons, Mr Olusola Ogundipe, in a publication of the Interior Ministry, said that the prisons system has become reformative rather than being punitive. He added that the prison system now prepares inmates for reintegration into the society. Mr. Ogundipe said that prisons are run according to the minimum

standards set by the United Nations and also that warders no longer carry batons about, which shows their respect for prisoners' basic human rights. Reported by This Day, 20 September 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709200309.html>

Prisoners still awaiting-trial after more than eight years: Investigations by Vanguard Features revealed that there were 2000 inmates awaiting-trial at Ikoyi Prison, which was constructed to accommodate only 800 inmates. Three of these 2000 inmates, Tony Anonye, Mohammed Usman and Sule Jamiu have been awaiting trial for over eight years. The food being served at the prison is insufficient and the medical facilities offered to prisoners also leave a lot to be desired. Reported by Okey Ndiribe, 19 September 2007, Vanguard, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709190868.html>

Cameroon

Upper Farm Prison in a sorry state: Once a flourishing prison farm at which prisoners used to engage in farming and rearing livestock, Upper Farm in the Southwest Province is now dilapidated. The toilets now pose a danger to the prisoners' health and that 'the state of degradation is so advanced that even the beds of the prison guards are antiquities.' The prison which was constructed to accommodate 100 inmates, now has virtually no capacity to detain prisoners sent there and that 'Upper Farm Prison is practically empty with only 20 prisoners who seem to stay there out of goodwill rather than because of incarceration.' Reported by Hortense Tchouta, 31 August 2007, The Post, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708310725.html>

Namibia

Unions unhappy about Labour Bill for excluding prison warders: Manfred Jatamunua, the Deputy Secretary General of the Public Service Union of Namibia (PSUN), told a press conference that the union was concerned about the new Labour Bill because it did not apply to the prison service. The bill classifies prison service personnel as having a military structure similar to that of the police and the army, which means they are not allowed to join associations or unions. The Union said that it had expressed its concern to the National Council (NC), the Labour Minister and the International Labour Organisation

(ILO). Reported by Denver Isaacs, The Namibian, 23 August 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708230553.html>

Zimbabwe

House recommends former prison to be converted into museum: While contributing to the Presidential speech on the opening of the Fifth Session of the Sixth Parliament of Zimbabwe, Cde Killion Gwanetsa, Member of Parliament for Chiredzi South, said that the former Gonakudzingwa Prison Camp in the Gonarezhou National Park should be converted into a museum. He likened it to the Robben Island Prison in South Africa where many liberators were detained. Gwanetsa said that many Zimbabwean nationalists were detained at the former Gonakudzingwa Prison Camp and that if turned into a museum, it would attract tourists and would generate revenue for the area. Reported by New Ziana, 23 August 2007, The Herald, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708230616.html>

Ethiopia

Close to 18,000 prisoners pardoned: Ethiopia's foreign ministry said that the federal and regional governments pardoned 17,765 prisoners to mark the occasion of the country's third millennium. In a statement issued by the foreign ministry, it was stated that the prisoners were pardoned after the government reviewed recommendations made by national and regional pardon boards. Reported by VOA, 28 September 2007, at <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-09-28-voa21.cfm> see also <http://oromonet.blogspot.com/2007/09/commemorating-ethiopian-millennium-as.html>

Uganda

Prisons chief opposes death sentence: The Commissioner of Prisons, Johnson Byabashaija, opposes capital punishment and thinks at least some of the more than 500 death row inmates in Uganda are innocent. But he said that if President Museveni ordered him to execute one of those prisoners, he would

obey. Reported by Glenna Gordon, 4 September 2007, New York Sun, at <http://www.nysun.com/article/61792> see also <http://ugandascarlettlion.blogspot.com/2007/09/new-york-sun-in-uganda-capital.html>

Swaziland

Torture investigations completed: The government has completed investigations into the alleged torture of bomb suspects who had been detained at different Correctional Services institutions. Percy Simelane, Government Press Secretary, said that the Commission of Inquiry had finished its investigations and government was considering the report. The investigations followed allegations by suspects made when they appeared in the High Court, stating that they were tortured and assaulted whilst incarcerated by the police. After the allegations, pressure groups and civil society organisations called for an inquiry into the matter. Reported by Njabulo Dlamini, 12 September 2007, The Swazi Observer, at <http://www.observer.org.sz/main.php?id=37988§ion=main>

Liberia

Child offenders languishing awaiting-trial: Eight child offenders awaiting trial at Monrovia Central Prison share a cramped and dirty cell. At night they fight over the cell's single foam mattress. They have no mosquito nets and lack proper sanitation. Most of the children have never seen a judge specialising in crimes committed by minors. At Monrovia Central Prison, while children have separate cells, they must interact with adult offenders during exercise and meal times and in bathrooms. Kitty van Gagnide, child protection officer with the UN Mission in Liberia said that in rural areas the situation is worse as 'sometimes juveniles are separated from adults only by a bench or makeshift wall.' Reported by UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 10 September 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709101316.html>

Kenya

Country adopts various prisons reforms: Kenyan Vice President, Moody Awori, told the Commonwealth Law Conference in Nairobi that the government has managed to change the conditions of the country's prisons, including improvement in the diet, clothing, bedding and access to information by inmates. He also said that prison warders were among those targeted in the reform agenda of the criminal justice system, focusing on the improvement of their terms of services and housing. He added that the prison service will continue to provide avenues for inmates to further their studies and acquire skills that would enable them to integrate successfully into society and earn a living at the end of their sentences. Written by the Vice President's Press Secretary, 11 September 2007, KBC, at <http://www.kbc.co.ke/story.asp?ID=44906>

Sudanese prison officials to be trained in Kenya: Colonel Atok Atem Barac, the spokesperson of the 39 trainee Sudanese senior prison officers, said that more than 300 Sudanese prison officers will in future receive training from the Kenya Government to improve the running of prisons in their county. Col. Barac said that his government was in the process of signing an agreement with Kenya to enable more training to be conducted. Reported by Gitonga Marete, 21 September 2007, The Nation, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709201197.html>

Sudan

Suspects allegedly tortured: Amnesty International reported that eight men arrested on accusations of trying to overthrow the government of Sudan had been beaten, suspended by their wrists and tortured in Khartoum's Kobar prison. However, the government has denied reports of torture. Sudanese Justice Minister, Mohammed Ali al-Mardi, said that his Ministry was taking legal action against Amnesty International. Sudanese Media Centre reported that the Sudanese Justice Ministry had asked Interpol for an arrest warrant for the "female 'manager'" of Amnesty International for defaming his country. Amnesty International said that the government should have investigated the allegations of torture instead of denying the truth. Reported by Andrew Heavens, 18 September 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=3045&art_id=nw20070918140837879C357780

Prison training centre opens: A prison staff training centre in southern Sudan was opened as part of

efforts by the United Nations Development Programme to rehabilitate the country's dilapidated prison service and also to help reintegrate former combatants from the north-south civil war into civilian life. The centre is expected to receive up to 1,500 ex-soldiers from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the first six months and they will be trained by instructors from the Sudanese prison service and staff from the rule of law and corrections team with the UN Mission in Sudan. Reported by UN News Service, 14 September 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709140926.html>

Tanzania

Gangsters allegedly planned to attack prison: Fourteen Kenyan gang members were gunned down in Tanzania while attempting to rob a bank and also allegedly planned to storm the Karanga Remand Prison to rescue fellow Kenyans locked up there for a number of charges, including robbery and murder. However, the Regional Police Commander, Lucas Ng'hoboko, said that he could neither confirm nor refute the allegations. Reported by Peter Temba, 8 September 2007, Daily News, at <http://www.dailynews-tsn.com/page.php?id=8545>

Mozambique

Prison warders smuggle sex workers into prison: Five police officers were detained in Mozambique for smuggling prostitutes into Maputo's Machava Maximum Security Prison. Fortunato Matangala, Director of Machava Prison, said the officers were suspended. They included a commander at the prison, an officer, a driver and guards. The prostitutes found inside the prison were not detained as the country's laws do not consider prostitution a crime. Reported by Sapa, 27 September 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=573820>

The Gambia

Journalist stays in prison for failure to fulfil bail conditions: Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) sources reported that Malick Jones, a principal producer of the state-owned Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS) was still being detained at Mile 2 Central Prison in Banjul because he failed to

fulfil his bail conditions. Jones was arrested with another journalist and detained incommunicado for allegedly passing false information to a media group. Reported by Media Foundation for West Africa, 20 September 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709210749.html>

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