

PRI e-newsletter September 2016

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E-newsletter

September 2016



Welcome to Penal Reform

International's monthly e-newsletter, a round-up of PRI and other penal reform news from around the world and a variety of criminal justice and human rights resources.

The views expressed in the news items below are not necessarily those of PRI.

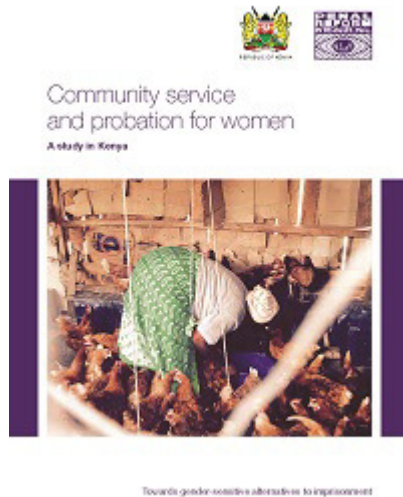
In this month's edition

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In the spotlight: [Community service and probation for women: a study in Kenya](#)

On 3 October, PRI, together with Kenya Probation and Aftercare Service launched a [new report](#) and [short film](#) in Nairobi following pioneering research on alternatives to prison for women.

Read the [press release here](#), which notes that the pilot project provides useful



lessons on implementing alternatives for women offenders in the African region and internationally.

The report examines the context in which women serve community sanctions (Community Service Orders and Probation Orders) in Kenya and their interactions and experiences of it.

Community sanctions are often a much better option for women than a prison sentence, but like many other aspects of criminal justice systems, it is usually set up with male offenders in mind, paying little attention to the reality of women's lives.

This report identifies challenges women face (how do they balance serving the Order with childcare commitments and their casual jobs, for example: Are their health problems taken into account when allocating work? Do they feel safe?) and what they need to maximise their chances of successfully completing the Order, and makes recommendations for improving the gender-sensitivity of the community sanctions system.

This report was produced as the first step of a project to develop a gender-sensitive approach to the delivery of community sanctions in Kenya, in line with the [UN Bangkok Rules](#) and was funded by the [Thailand Institute for Justice](#).

Update! Kenya's correctional services principal secretary announced this week that [Kenya would take steps to decongest prisons](#), citing in particular offences of illegal brewing and illegal collection of firewood which penalise the poor, and especially women, as highlighted in PRI's report.

[Short film: 'Equal justice': making community sanctions work for women in Kenya](#)



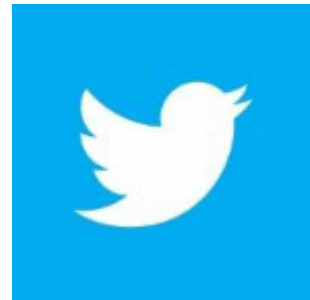
Watch our short film about the research [here](#), which highlights the benefits of community service for women as well as the challenges they face.

Feedback needed! Following the film there is a short survey and PRI would be grateful if you could tell us what you think.

Tweet of the month

This month from PRI:

[Stigma common for women: 'My son started drinking alcohol when I was in pretrial detention ... community now blames me'](#)



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New expert blog



[Where one door closes: what will the recent US Department of Justice decision mean for private prisons?](#)

Last month, the US Department of Justice announced that it would phase out, with a view to ending, its use of private prisons. In this expert blog, David Fathi, Director of the [American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project](#) and PRI

Board Member, gives his predictions for the future involvement of private companies in US

corrections.

Global advocacy



PROMOTING
THE NELSON
MANDELA
RULES



NEW! Guidance on implementation of the Nelson Mandela Rules

Initial guidance on the [new Nelson Mandela Rules](#), based on the deliberations of [a meeting of experts](#) organised by Penal Reform International and Essex University Human Rights Centre earlier this year, is now available on our website. A full paper, representing guidance discussed in six Working Groups, will be published later this year.

Oral statement to the OSCE on the prevention of radicalisation in prisons

PRI delivered this [statement](#) to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on 27 September 2016 regarding the management of extremist offenders in prison and the risk of radicalisation, emphasising the importance of a human-rights based approach. Read this [expert blog](#) on the subject.

Note that: [PRI's Middle East and North Africa office has published its regular newsletter this month on the topic of counter-radicalisation and prison systems. In Arabic only.](#)

Nils Melzer appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Torture

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva has appointed Mr Nils Melzer as the next UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Mr Melzer will take over from current mandate holder Juan E. Méndez on 1 November. [Read an interview](#) by the Association for the Prevention of Torture with Mr Melzer.

Conditions in detention

Resources from VERA on solitary confinement/'segregation'

The US-based VERA Institute of Justice has developed a [resource centre](#) on the use of solitary confinement and recently held a panel on the topic; '[Reforming the use of solitary confinement: a conversation](#)' which is available to watch online.

For more on this issue see the [opinion piece written by President Obama](#) in the Washington Post from January of this year.

The importance of architectural design in prison construction

Prison expert, Isabel Hight, discusses the challenges of building prisons that meet humanitarian standards in countries where large-scale imprisonment is seen as a Western concept. She raises the question: what makes a good prison and why is it important to get the design right. She is clear that design is crucial to creating an environment in which prisoners can live and not become institutionalised. Read more about architecture and prisons in these two blogs:

- [How to build for success: prison design and infrastructure as a tool for rehabilitation](#)
- ["Minus the urinals and painted pink"? What should a women's prison look like?](#)

Other news and resources

Australia: [Indigenous prisoner population doubles despite drop in arrests](#)

France: [French prison's crisis: plans to create 10,000-16,000 new places](#)

France: [Overpopulated French prison 'infested' with rats and bed bugs](#)

Georgia: [Council of Europe states that the current Government had addressed the issue of prison overcrowding and taken action to improve the lives of inmates in Georgia's prisons](#)

Honduras: [A new maximum security prison opens, marking an initial step toward a planned overhaul of the country's troubled correctional system](#)

Malawi: [Delays in bringing murder cases to trial causing mental health issues for suspects held on remand](#)

Myanmar: [Activists report on dire conditions in Myanmar's prisons](#)

Romania: [Prison staff stage a number of protests over conditions and wage inequalities, and call for the resignation of the justice minister](#)

Senegal: [Prisoners riot at Rebeuss prison](#)

Senegal: [Government pledges to build two new prisons following rioting](#)

Senegal: [Child prisoners learn fencing to stay out of trouble](#)

Switzerland: [Overcrowding in Swiss prisons and detention centres eased slightly last year, but a shortage remains for prisoners with mental health problems](#)

Thailand: [Thai prisoners the victims of slave labour](#)

UK: The [Prisons and Probation Ombudsman](#) has produced a [learning lessons bulletin](#) examining the lessons to be learned from the Ombudsman's investigations into the killing of one prisoner by another

UK: [The Independent Monitoring Board expresses concern about the availability of illegal substances at HMP Coldingley](#)

UK: [Whitehall's plan to rid the country of foreign criminals: the Justice and International](#)

[Development departments are working together to improve Britain's success at removing foreign criminals](#)

Ukraine: [Human rights activists in eastern Ukraine say they have evidence that slave labour camps are operating in rebel-controlled areas](#)

Zimbabwe: [Prisoners 'sold' as cheap labour for \\$2 per day](#)

On rehabilitation and reintegration

New Zealand: [\\$15.3 million trial to boost prisoners' job prospects](#)

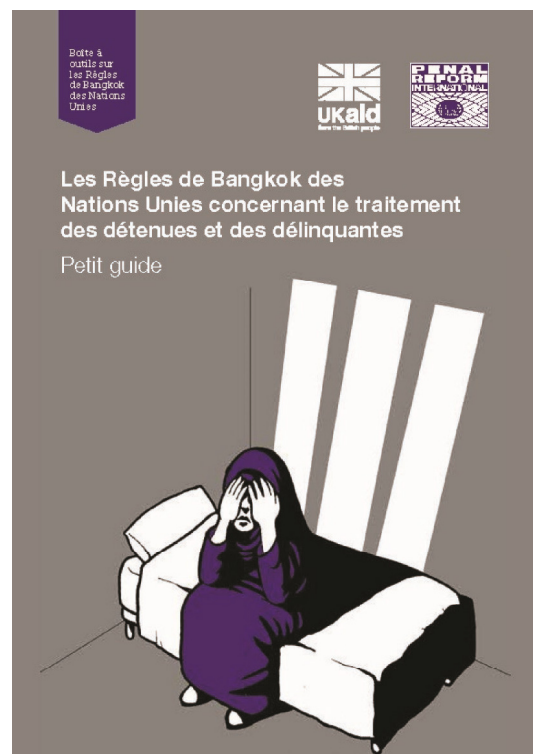
New Zealand: [Two thirds of prisoners unable to do everyday literacy tasks](#)

UK: [Teachers going into Parc Prison for a parents' evening to be held behind bars, aimed at cutting re-offending by getting father prisoners more involved with their children](#)

Women in the criminal justice system

PRI's short illustrated guide to the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the 'Bangkok Rules') is now available in [French](#). It covers:

- the profile of women prisoners and why international standards were needed
- who the Rules protect
- what the Rules say
- who should be involved in their implementation



[Russian Government commission approves bills on status of convicted mothers in Russian prisons](#)

The Government Commission for Legislative Drafting Activities has approved bills aimed to improve the status of convicted mothers in Russian prisons, by making the following changes:

- the setting aside of prison sentences for expectant mothers, women and single fathers with children under 14 years not only at the stage of sentence execution but also at the time of delivering judgment

- women and single fathers with children under 14 years or a disabled child will gain the right to four meetings with their children per year outside the prison grounds
- the transfer of convicted pregnant women will only be allowed if there is a medical report and the woman is accompanied by a healthcare worker
- to allow some prisoners to live and work outside prison under surveillance of its administration for six months before the end of the prison term

PRI is a member of the official working group on this issue.

Home truths: housing for women in the criminal justice system

Six in 10 women do not have homes to go to on release from prison, a UK-wide report published today by the [Prison Reform Trust](#) and [Women in Prison](#).

[The report](#) says that the failure to solve a chronic shortage of suitable housing options for women who offend leads to more crime, more victims and more unnecessary and expensive imprisonment. The briefing presents the evidence and makes recommendations for change.

Also see the [thematic report](#) published by the UK HM Inspectorate of Probation on the provision and quality of services in the community for women offenders.

Other news and resources

Australia: [Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre has been identified as the most overcrowded prison in Queensland](#)

Nigeria: [The report of the survey on women prisoners and children living in Nigerian prisons](#) conducted by [CURE-Nigeria](#) and the Federal Ministry of Justice and the National Human Rights Commission, Abuja in 2015

On women and drugs: [Is the 'war on drugs' destroying women's lives?](#)

Alternatives to imprisonment

Alternative sentencing and 'net-widening'

Alternative sentences result in a “widening of the net” according to Catherine Heard of the [Institute for Criminal Policy Research](#). Rather than serving as an alternative to prison, such sentences are often applied as additional punishments—often to deal with newly criminalised offences, such as breaking welfare rules or anti-social behaviour. Ms Heard says that non-prison sentences are increasingly designed to control and monitor offenders rather than reform them.

Other news and resources

Australia: [Justice Reinvestment programme funds community programs to reduce offending and incarceration rates](#)

Ireland: [Probation chief backs youth bail scheme trying to keep 'as many young people out of the custodial system'](#)

Ireland: [Proposal to keep mentally ill people out of prisons](#)

New Zealand: [More offenders to wear electronic bracelets](#)

Portugal: [More people given community service orders instead of prison terms](#)

UK: [Evidence mounting for value of problem-solving courts](#)

UK: [MOJ is unable to demonstrate that the 'Transforming Probation' programme is a success according to the Public Accounts Committee latest report.](#)

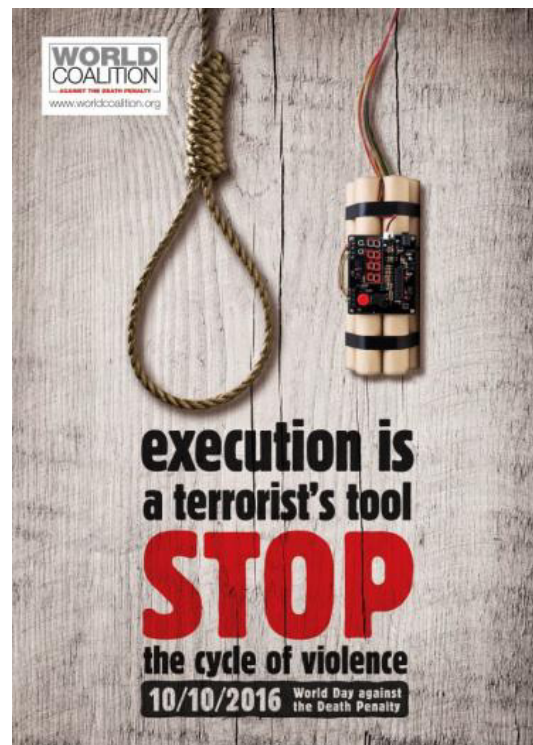
USA: [Survey finds California dramatically reduces incarceration without major increase in crime although recidivism remains high and spending continues to rise](#)

Death penalty abolition

World Day against the Death Penalty 2016

On 10 October, the 14th World Day against the Death Penalty will be used by [the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty](#) to highlight and raise awareness of the use of the death penalty for terrorism-related offences, and to reduce its use.

Please join PRI and other World Coalition's members in disseminating the following resources: this [leaflet](#) provides information about the countries that have the death penalty for terrorism and presents arguments against the death penalty and this [detailed factsheet on the use of the death penalty for terrorism](#).



[The death penalty in the OSCE area: background paper 2016](#)

[The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' 'The death penalty in the OSCE area: background paper 2016'](#) provides a concise update of changes in the status of the death penalty in OSCE participating States since 2015, and is intended to promote constructive discussion of the issue. It covers the period from 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016.

Other news:

Japan: [Calls to ban the death penalty grow louder](#) as Japan's legal community is to declare its opposition to capital punishment amid concern over miscarriages of justice

Malawi: [Former death row prisoner released after 13 years of imprisonment](#)

Taiwan: [The campaign to end the death penalty in Taiwan](#)

Zimbabwe: [Constitutional court unanimously declares life without parole to be cruel and inhuman](#)

Torture prevention

UN torture prevention body urges Kazakhstan to enhance prisoner rehabilitation

Following a visit to Kazakhstan by the UN Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Torture, the Sub-Committee noted that "Kazakhstan has significantly reduced the number of people deprived of their liberty and improved conditions of detention, but the prison system continues to overemphasize restrictions and punishment, rather than reintegration and rehabilitation" [Read their statement](#).

NGO warns of widespread torture in Tunisian prisons

More than 400 cases of torture have been reported in prisons across Tunisia according to the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) in the period from October 2013 to October 2015. However, the alleged torture cases by the Tunisian regime were said to be "not systematic" in nature.

Amnesty International: Torture, Disease and Death in Syria's Prisons

[The report](#) estimates that 17,723 people died in custody across Syria between March 2011, when the uprising against President Bashar Assad began, and December 2015 - equivalent to about 10 people each day or more than 300 a month. According to the report, new detainees are subjected to "security checks" that often involve women being sexually assaulted by male guards.

Justice for children

Government, civil society and international experts gather in Kazakhstan, to discuss treatment of children in institutions



Between 13 and 15 September, PRI's Central Asia office hosted an International Symposium on the prevention of violence against children in closed institutions in Central Asia in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The Symposium marked the end of a [three-year project, funded by the European Union](#) and implemented by PRI with national partners in the three countries, which aimed to achieve the progressive elimination of violence against children in closed institutions.

This project has had considerable success in bringing about reforms to provide better protection for children in the region. More about the project and its results can be found in [the mid-term evaluation](#). A final evaluation will be published soon.

The impact of distance from home on children in custody

A new [thematic report published by HM Inspectorate of Prisons](#) investigates the impact that distance from home has on children in custody.

The International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents Conference

The conference will take place in Auckland, New Zealand on 20-23 March 2017. It will bring together those championing the rights of children with parents in prison from across the world - particularly non-European countries. Details are [here](#).

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