

PRI E Newsletter July 2013



PRI E-Newsletter: July 2013

Welcome to Penal Reform International's 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 are not necessarily those of PRI.

Please let us know what you think by emailing: publications@penalreform.org

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

[Life Imprisonment and the Right to Hope - by Dirk van Zyl Smit*](#)

All prisoners, including those sentenced to life imprisonment, should have a prospect of release. Failure to provide for such a prospect by setting up a mechanism to review life sentences after a reasonable period amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment, which infringes the prohibition on such treatment in Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This was the essence of the decision on 9 July 2013 of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of [Vinter and others v United Kingdom](#).

[Read the full blog on this important decision and what it means for penal reform.](#)

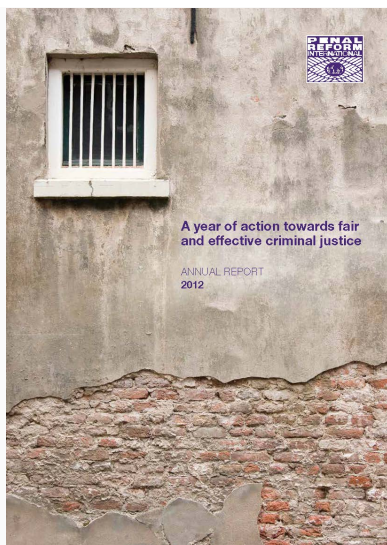
* Dirk van Zyl Smit is a member of the Board of PRI. He is a Professor of Comparative and International Penal Law at the University of Nottingham and was a member of the legal team of the applicant in the *Vinter* case.

Other comments:

- Interview with Professor van Zyl Smit, [Is life imprisonment without parole a cruel and unusual punishment?](#)
- PRI's short briefing paper, [Life after death - what replaces the death penalty?](#) The briefing sets out the human rights concerns surrounding the increasing use of life imprisonment and gives recommendations for reform (English, French and Russian).

NEW FROM PRI

[Looking back at 2012 - PRI's Annual Report](#)



This year's annual report looks at highlights from each month in 2012, and gives an overview of the breadth and depth of PRI's work.

For a hard copy of the report [please email us at publications@penalreform.org](mailto:publications@penalreform.org).

New website is launched

Last week we launched a fresh and snazzy new website! New features include an easy search function (where resources and our tools can be searched by theme, language, region, type of content, etc). Our priority issues are presented in an accessible way – providing key facts, our main activities, resources available and international standards relating to each priority.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPROVEMENTS TO IMPRISONMENT

Blog by Rob Allen: Western Kenya: community service supervisors

(1 July) A national strike by Kenya's teachers has not prevented more than fifteen school heads and deputy heads taking part in PRI's latest training seminars designed to promote alternatives to prison in East Africa.

PRI blog: Nikhil Roy discusses prison policy with Professor Nils Christie

(3 June) PRI's Programme Development Director discusses the merits of providing social services for rehabilitation in prison, and the importance of making professional services independent from the prison service, with Norway's eminent criminologist Professor Nils Christie.

Judges trained on Alternatives in Jordan

(5-6 June) PRI (MENA Office) held a workshop on alternative measures and restorative justice for judges, prosecutors and conciliation judges. The 19 participants were introduced to international standards on children rights, in particular children in conflict with the law. They workshop encouraged participants to apply measures and alternative sanctions in their future work, and to improve their procedures.

News and resources

- [Report - Weaving Justice: Pretrial Prisoners in the City of Sao Paulo](#) by the Institute for Land, Work and Citizenship and the National Catholic Prison Ministry, Support provided by Open Society Foundations
- [Kenya: Use of paralegals in Kenyan prisons](#). (See Also [PRI's Index of Paralegals working across Africa](#))
- UK: [Legal aid cuts will lead to more miscarriages of justice, top judges warn](#)
- Armenia: [Ombudsman reports overcrowding is the biggest problem within prisons](#)
- UNODC launch [World Drug Report 2013](#) in Vienna. The Report highlights benefits of drug treatment programmes as an alternative to prison.
- Eritrea: [Prisoners in Sembel Prison and Rehabilitation Centre Complete Academic and Training Courses](#)
- Russia: [ECtHR Automatic and indiscriminate ban on Russian prisoners' voting rights was disproportionate](#)
- UK: [BBC radio programme 'The truth about mental health'](#)

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

[Eight country research reports on policy and legislation to prevent and address violence against children](#)

The eight country research reports - developed over the past year and now available in a range of languages - aim to increase the understanding of the specific legal and policy measures that can work to prevent and remedy violence against children. The reports focus on police and pre-trial detention settings where children are most at risk of being subject to violence. The countries covered are Bangladesh, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tanzania and Uganda.

[PRI blog: Restorative Justice for Children: from concept to realisation](#)

(26-28 June) PRI's Programme Development Director reports on a consultation with experts in Bali, Indonesia, on restorative justice.

News and resources

- [Inter-American Court of Human Rights rules against imposition of life sentences on children](#)
- [Access to Justice for Children: Call for NGO submissions to the UN](#)
- India: [Juvenile court to give first verdict in Delhi gang rape case on July 25](#)
- Ireland: [St Patrick's Institution to close within six months](#) follows a [recommendation from the Inspector of Prisons](#) to ensure the safe and secure custody of all children and young people detained there.

WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICES SYSTEM

[PRI blog: Alison Hannah on problems faced by women in prison in Bangladesh](#)

(6 July) PRI and partner organisation, [Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust \(BLAST\)](#) organised a one day training session for prison staff on implementing the [Bangkok Rules](#) for women prisoners. PRI's Executive Director, Alison Hannah, writes about issues faced in women prisons in Bangladesh, including those relating to healthcare and hygiene (such as access to sanitary pads), uncomfortable visits with families, and the need for rehabilitation and reintegration support.



Launch of Bangkok Rules on women offenders and prisoners: Toolbox for Implementation

On 16 October, in the margins of the 3rd Committee at the United Nations in New York, PRI will launch three new tools aimed at assisting with the implementation of the UN Bangkok Rules. This toolbox will include a [Guidance Document and Index of Implementation](#) will be published, with the Thailand Institute of Justice, and an e-learning course, [How to address the needs of women in detention: based on the Bangkok Rules](#), developed with Human Rights Education Associates, will go live. All three tools will be available in Arabic, English and Russian.

If you would like to be notified of these tools and other news relating to women in detention sign up to our

quarterly e-bulletin by emailing info@penalreform.org

News and resources

- Uganda: [New Ugandan guidelines take into account best interests of child and the Bangkok Rules in terms of sentencing a care-giver](#)
- UK: [Prison Reform Trust: The needs of women offenders to be recognised in law](#)
- UK: [Women offenders 'afterthought' in rehabilitation plans](#)

TORTURE PREVENTION

New assessment tools for NPMs

PRI and the Association for the Prevention of Torture are developing a practical assessment tool for NPMs and other monitoring bodies to support them in conducting effective visits to places of detention, and to explore particular thematic issues relevant to monitoring. The tool will include both practical components and checklists, and a series of papers on topics relevant to torture prevention, including pre-trial detention, gender-sensitive monitoring, institutional culture in prisons, security and dignity, and issues facing LGBTI detainees.

The tool was piloted with the Georgian NPM in Tbilisi at the end of May, and it will be launched in October 2013.

UN Special Rapporteur on Torture announces new website - and upcoming thematic report

The SR on Torture, Juan E Méndez, and the Washington College of Law have launched a new website for the Anti-Torture Initiative (ATI), available at www.antitorture.org.

An upcoming thematic report to the 68th Session of the General Assembly in October 2013 will focus on the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMRs) as they relate to various issues of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

News and resources

- Report from Freedom from Torture: [The Poverty Barrier: The Right to Rehabilitation for Survivors of Torture in the UK](#)
- Kazakhstan: [Watchdog signals alarm over torture, prison conditions](#)
- Central Asia: [Amnesty condemns abductions, torture in ex-soviet Asian States](#)
- REDRESS to host [Seminar on Global Perspectives on Justice for Torture: Experiences, Challenges and Strategies](#) (2 August, London)

ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

Abolition in Tajikistan: New recommendations and commitments

(21 June) PRI (Central Asia Office) held a roundtable with government officials, judges, NGOs and international experts/representatives on the death penalty and life imprisonment in Tajikistan, with the financial support of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. Tajikistan officially declared a moratorium on the death penalty in 2004. The key recommendations that came out of the roundtable included the need for a public awareness-raising campaign; amendments to national legislation; learning from international experience on abolition; and to improve the work of state agencies on the importance of abolition. State officials and MPs committed to developing and implementing the recommendations.

Death penalty in Belarus

(17-21 June) Various meetings and events were attended by PRI (Russia, Belarus and Ukraine Office) on the death penalty in Belarus during June. These included a [series of task-force meetings](#) with members of the Belarusian Working Group on the death penalty and a roundtable with the Council of Europe where PRI presented results of research conducted on the topic.

World Congress against the Death Penalty

(12-15 June) PRI participated in the 5th World Congress against the Death Penalty in Madrid which brought together over 1,000 actors fighting against the death penalty. During the three day meeting NGOs, politicians, lawyers and academics reviewed death penalty developments and discussed abolitionist strategies at the national, regional and international levels with a specific focus on the regions of Africa and the Middle East. These strategies will encourage complementary action by States, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs.

News and resources

- US: [Human rights groups release preliminary death penalty findings](#)
- Pakistan: [Death penalty reintroduced](#)
- Vietnam: [Death row inmates enduring a wait worse than death](#)

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