

Discrimination against women in criminal justice systems



Treatment and conditions of detention for women must be gender-sensitive, says CEDAW¹

In a key ruling in 2011 the CEDAW Committee ruled on the discrimination against and sexual harassment of a female prisoner, taking into account the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the so-called Bangkok Rules).

In reaching its views, the Committee reiterated that failure of detention facilities to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to the specific needs of women prisoners constitutes discrimination, within the meaning of article 1 of CEDAW.

Introduction

In 2011, the Inter-Parliamentary Union formulated its Strategy 2012–2017 and—alongside the strategic objective of Protecting and Promoting Human Rights—has set as one of its main strategic objectives the respect for women's rights.

Amongst various areas in which parliamentarians play a crucial role in promoting and protecting women's rights, the discrimination against women and girls in the criminal justice system constitutes an issue usually less seen and less addressed than others.

Concerns range from discriminatory, gender-specific offences and reasons for detention respectively to the impact of the lack of financial resources in order to prevent detention and a prison system that has been designed by men for male prisoners. Multiple discrimination results in particular vulnerability of girls, non-nationals and women from minority groups, pregnant women and women with disabilities.

The engagement of national institutions, in particular of national parliaments, is key to making progress in this area. The IPU could take an important role by discussing this issue at one of the forthcoming Assemblies, and thereby deliver on priorities formulated in the IPU's Strategy 2012–2017 in more than one regard:

1. First and foremost an agenda item on the discrimination against women and girls in the criminal justice system would deliver on **IPU Strategy Objective 2, Respect for Women's Rights**.
2. In looking into the situation of girls in conflict or contact with the criminal justice system it would at the same time take up an important and often overlooked aspect of **Children's Rights—IPU Strategy Objective 3**. Discussion at the IPU could include the difficult and neglected situation of children of incarcerated parents, whether they accompany their parent into prison or whether they are left outside.
3. At the same time the discussion would contribute to the objective of **building the capacity of parliaments** and strengthening their contribution to human rights promotion and protection, as formulated in subgoal 1 of the **IPU Strategy Objective 3**.
4. The work of parliaments with the **United Nations** would also be enhanced, fulfilling **IPU Strategy Objective 4**, given the issue touches upon the mandate of a whole range of United Nations bodies and mechanisms, first and foremost CEDAW, the UN Working Group on discrimination against women in law and practice and the Sub-Committee to Prevent Torture (SPT).

PRI would therefore like to suggest that “Discrimination against women in criminal justice systems” be introduced as one of the areas of discussion in one of the forthcoming Assembly meetings of the IPU, for example the 128th Assembly in March 2013.

¹ *Inga Abramova v Belarus*, Communication No. 23/2009, UN Doc. CEDAW/C/49/D/20/2008 (2011)

Background

The circumstances in which women commit criminal offences are different from men. A considerable proportion of women offenders are in prison as a direct or indirect result of the multiple layers of discrimination and deprivation, often experienced at the hands of their husbands or partners, their family and the community.

Offences committed by women are closely linked to poverty and often a means of survival to support their family and children. The **profile and background** of women in prison, and the reasons for which they are imprisoned, differ significantly from those of men.

Like men, women prisoners typically come from economically and socially disadvantaged segments of society, but drug users, lower-level property offenders, and sex workers are overrepresented.² In contrast to male prison populations, women mainly commit petty crimes, theft and fraud and studies have demonstrated that prior emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse contributes to women's criminal behaviour.³ Due to their economic status, they are particularly vulnerable to being detained because of their inability to pay fines for petty offences and/or to pay bail.

Women (and girls) comprise the **minority of prisoners** around the world, constituting an estimated 2 to 9% of national prison populations. However, the number of imprisoned women has increased significantly in some countries, and at a greater rate than for men.

Due to their small number amongst the prison population, the specific needs and characteristics of women and girls as subjects of the criminal justice system have tended to remain unacknowledged and unaddressed. Prison systems and prison regimes are almost invariably **designed for the majority male prison population** – from the architecture of prisons, to security procedures, to facilities for healthcare, family contact, work and training. As a consequence, few prisons meet the specific needs of women prisoners, and often do not prepare them for release with gender-appropriate rehabilitation.

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (**Bangkok Rules**)⁴ were adopted in December 2010 to rectify the lack of standards, however the international community still lacks awareness and commitment to implementation.

Gender roles result in a **particular stigma** attached to women in prison, and while spouses regularly support their husbands in prison and upon release as a matter of course, reciprocally women tend to be shunned by their spouse—and often even the whole family—if they are detained.

At the same time, women are often the sole or **primary caretaker** of young children, resulting in a particular impact of even short periods of detention on children and the wider family.

To date, **international bodies** have focussed on women's access to (criminal) justice as victims of domestic and sexual violence, on their enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights, on their socio-economic status and their status-related civil rights, whereas criminal justice issues related to women “in conflict with the law”—as alleged offenders in the criminal justice system—has attracted by far less attention.

PRI would therefore like to encourage the Inter-Parliamentary Union to embark on the issue of **discrimination against women as alleged offenders in the justice system** and would like to outline below the main issues arising in this context in order to facilitate discussions to this effect:

1. Gender-specific / status offences
2. Disadvantages during penal procedures
3. Non-custodial measures
4. Vulnerability to sexual abuse
5. Imprisonment / Detention
6. Girls in prison
7. Rehabilitation

2 For example, in Moscow in 2001, 64 per cent of women in pre-trial detention had been charged with theft. In Croatia, 7.8 per cent of women were imprisoned for violent offences in 1998, with the rest having been convicted of property offences, crimes against public safety, traffic offences and offences relating to the authenticity of documents. In the Czech Republic in the same year the prosecution of over one third of all women involved property-related offences and another third involved economic crimes. In the same year women comprised 9 per cent of all violent criminal offenders. (UNODC, Handbook for Prison managers and Policymakers on Women and Imprisonment, 2008, page 89)

3 For example, studies in the U. S. have demonstrated that “[o]ne of the most significant risk factors is prior victimization (*Women Offenders: Programming Needs and Promising Approaches*, National Institute of Justice, 1998). According to the 2002 Survey of Inmates in Local Jails, a national survey of jail inmates conducted every 5 to 6 years, 36% of female inmates reported they had been sexually abused in the past. (*Profile of Jail Inmates*, 2002, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). (...) Furthermore, according to the 1998 National Council on Crime and Delinquency multidimensional study of girls in the California juvenile justice system, 92% of the juvenile female offenders interviewed in 1998 reported that they had been subjected to some form of emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse (*Juvenile Justice Journal Volume VI, Number 1, Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999. (as quoted by National Criminal Justice Reference Service, US Department of Justice, <https://www.ncjrs.gov/spotlight/wgcjs/summary.html>)

4 In 1980 the 6th UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders recognised that women often do not receive the same attention and consideration as male offenders. However, it took until 2009 for the Crime Commission to task an expert group with the development of standards to explicitly address this gap.

1. Gender-specific / status offences

The term “status offences” refers to laws prohibiting certain actions towards persons based on their sex, race, nationality, religion, age etc.

In many countries where criminal sanctions are used to curb sexual or religious “immorality”, offences such as adultery, sexual misconduct, violations of dress codes or prostitution **penalise women exclusively or disproportionately**. Some studies also suggest that females charged on moral or status offences are treated more harshly than males, presumably for having transgressed their gender role.

In some jurisdictions, women even face charges of adultery where there is clear indication that a rape occurred.

Again, in some other countries detention is used as a **form of “protection”** for victims of rape, to protect the victim as well as to ensure that she will testify against her rapist in court. While in exceptional circumstances such measures may need to be taken for limited periods, every effort needs to be made to ensure protection involves means that do not involve detention. Such practice is further victimising women and deters them from reporting rape and sexual abuse, thereby allowing perpetrators to escape justice.⁵

In some countries, particularly in the developing world, most women will never come into contact with the formal justice system, but will be confronted with **informal justice systems**, which the community may perceive as more legitimate than formal courts and in tune with local customs. However, it is very difficult to apply human rights standards to informal justice systems and they rarely guarantee women’s right to equality before the law. Rather, most informal justice systems are dominated by male elders or community leaders and tend to perpetuate discrimination against women, largely excluding women from decision-making and preserving patriarchal notions of how men and women should behave.

Good Practice

“As the result of a widespread campaign initiated and coordinated by women’s groups all around [Turkey], in 1996 Article 441 of the Penal Code regulating adultery by men and two years later, in 1998, Article 440 of the Penal Code regulating adultery by women were annulled by the Turkish Constitutional Court on grounds of violating the constitutional principle of equality before the law.” (Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways, The New Legal Status of Women in Turkey, Istanbul: WWHR-New Ways, 2002, p. 18)

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences are held in the **United Kingdom** in cases of domestic violence. Key agencies – police, probation, education, health, housing and the voluntary sector – work together on an individual victim’s case to share information. This means that they can build up a comprehensive picture of the abuse and agree action to support and protect domestic violence victims and their families. (Redefining Justice: Addressing the individual needs of victims and witnesses, Sara Payne, Victim Support Services, UK, 2009)

2. Disadvantages during penal procedures

Women’s imprisonment is closely related to poverty, both because offences often relate to supporting their family and escaping poverty and because they lack access to financial resources in order to prevent detention.

The majority of offending and imprisoned women come from socially disadvantaged communities and groups. In many countries typical female offenders will be young, unemployed, have low levels of education and have dependent children. Typically, they lack information on their rights.

Discrimination against women in society results in unequal power relations and access to economic resources. As a result, women in conflict with the law depend on the willingness of male family members to spend resources on due process of law for them.

This is reflected in particular vulnerability to being deprived of their liberty, for reasons including an **inability to pay for legal representation, fines for petty offences or to meet financial and other bail or sentencing obligations**.

⁵ In the light of such practices, Rule 59 of the Bangkok Rules provides that “[g]enerally, non-custodial means of protection, for example in shelters managed by independent bodies, non-governmental organizations or other community services, shall be used to protect women who need such protection. Temporary measures involving custody to protect a woman shall only be applied when necessary and expressly requested by the woman concerned and shall in all cases be supervised by judicial or other competent authorities. Such protective measures shall not be continued against the will of the woman concerned.”

Good Practice

In 2000, a Paralegal Advisory Service (PAS) was set up by four NGOs in **Malawi**, with the support and assistance of Penal Reform International. PAS represented a unique partnership between the prison service and NGOs. Working closely with the prison administrations, PAS aimed: to improve communication, cooperation and coordination between the prisons, courts and police; to increase legal literacy, helping prisoners to understand the law and how it affects them; and to provide legal advice and assistance, enabling prisoners to apply the law and to help themselves. From the outset, PAS particularly targeted cases involving vulnerable groups in prisons, including women. (Msiska, Clifford W., National Coordinator, Paralegal Advisory Service, The Role of Paralegals in the Reform of Pre-trial Detention: Insights from Malawi)

In **Afghanistan** UNIFEM developed a paralegal programme in partnership with the MOJ, Ministry of Interior (MOI), MOWA, Afghan Women's Network and Kabul University, to increase the legal information and support available to women in more remote areas of Afghanistan. (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Paralegal Programme Proposal, November 2006.)

3. Non-custodial measures

A considerable proportion of women offenders do not necessarily pose a risk to society and their imprisonment may not help, but hinder their social reintegration. Accordingly, the criminal justice system should take into account their backgrounds and reasons that have led to the offence committed and provide the assistance required to help them overcome the underlying factors leading to criminal behaviour.

However, in most societies gender-specific alternatives to prison tailored to meet the specific requirements of women offenders, in order to reduce re-offending, are lacking, hindering the effective implementation of non-custodial sanctions and measures in the case of many women offenders.

The Bangkok Rules therefore provide, in Rule 57, that “[g]ender-specific options for diversionary measures and **pretrial and sentencing alternatives** shall be developed within Member States' legal systems, taking account of the history of victimization of many women offenders and their caretaking responsibilities.”

For example, research has indicated that restorative justice can be effective in the social reintegration of women in some cultures. Since a large proportion of women have mental healthcare needs, are drug-and/or alcohol-dependent, or suffer from the trauma of domestic violence or sexual abuse, diverting them to a suitable gender-appropriate treatment programme would address their needs much more effectively than the harsh environment of prisons.⁶

The impact of being held in pre-trial detention, even for short periods, can be severe if the prisoner is the sole carer of the children—a role still overwhelmingly held by mothers. Even a short period in prison may have damaging, long-term consequences for the children concerned and should be avoided, unless unavoidable for the purposes of justice.

By keeping women out of prison, where imprisonment is not necessary or justified, their children may be saved from the enduring adverse effects of their mothers' imprisonment, including their possible institutionalisation and own future incarceration.

⁶ Bloom B., Owen, B. Owen & S. Covington, Gender Responsive Strategies: Research Practice & Guiding Principles for Female Offenders. National Institute of Justice, US Dept. of Justice, USA, 2003.

Good Practice

In 2007 the Constitutional Court of **South Africa** ruled that “the best interests of the child are paramount in all matters concerning the child on sentencing of primary caregivers of young children.” The Court, upon appeal by a mother of three children aged 16, 12 and 8, suspended the portion of the four-year prison sentence the woman had not yet served: “Ms Cawood’s [a social worker] report indicates that all three boys rely on M. as their primary source of emotional security, and that imprisonment of M. would be emotionally, developmentally, physically, materially, educationally and socially disadvantageous to them. In Ms Cawood’s view, should M. be incarcerated, the children would suffer: loss of their source of maternal and emotional support; loss of their home and familiar neighbourhood; disruption in school routines, possible problems in transporting to and from school; impact on their healthy developmental process; and separation of the siblings.” The court ordered to suspend for four years M.’s imprisonment (of 45 months) on condition that she would not be convicted of an offence committed during the period of suspension, of which dishonesty was an element, and further on condition that she complied fully with the order’s provisions. (Constitutional Court of South Africa, S. v. M., 26 September 2007, Ref. no. [2008] (3) SA 232 (CC) 261)⁷

In **Russia**, federal legislation allows for mothers of children under the age of 14 and pregnant women who have been convicted of less serious offences to have their sentences deferred, shortened or revoked. Female prisoners who are pregnant or who have young children and who are imprisoned for less serious offences may have their sentences deferred until their children have reached the age of 14. (Russian Federation: Fourth periodic report to the UN Committee against Torture, July 2004, (CAT/C/55/Add.11)

In **Thailand**, in mid-2005, women prisoners comprised 17.2 per cent of the overall prison population, which was an exceptionally high proportion in comparison to other countries worldwide. The ratio of female prisoners convicted of drug-related offences had risen to 88 per cent of the total female prison population. The government responded to the situation with the implementation of the Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act, which stipulates diversion from prosecution and compulsory treatment for drug abusers. As a result the prison population was reported to show a decreasing trend. By 2005 Thailand was deploying a drug policy which included comprehensive demand reduction strategies, together with strict control and penalties for suppliers, in addition to diversion and treatment for drug addicts. (*UNODC, Handbook for prison managers and policymakers on Women Imprisonment*, 2008, page 93)

4. Vulnerability to sexual abuse

In many regards, women have a **heightened vulnerability** to mental and physical abuse during arrest, questioning and in prison.

Women prisoners are at particular risk of rape, sexual assault and humiliation. In addition to open assault, they are vulnerable to sexual misconduct by prison staff of all forms, improper touching during searches, and being watched when dressing, showering or using the toilet occur, which the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women describes as “sanctioned sexual harassment”. Custody, for many women, includes ill-treatment, including threats of rape, touching, “virginity testing”, being stripped naked, invasive body searches, insults and humiliations of a sexual nature or even rape.

Moreover, the **impact** of, for example, strip-searches on women is disproportionately greater than on men, as women detainees as a group present a higher incidence of previous sexual assault than both the general community and their male counterparts.

Further, there are cases of **dependency** of prisoners upon prison staff which leads to increased vulnerability

to sexual exploitation, as it drives them to ‘willingly’ trade sex for favours.

Adequate protection and oversight mechanisms are lacking while prisoners who are abused or exploited by prison staff usually have little opportunity of escaping from the abuser. Women are particularly afraid of making complaints due to fears of **retaliation** and the **stigmatisation** of sexual abuse.

5. Imprisonment / Detention

Due to the smaller number of women prisoners, they are usually being housed in annexes to male prisons, often inadequately separated from the male population and subject to an increased risk of overcrowding. Fewer women’s prisons also mean greater distances from their homes and families, resulting in disadvantages in receiving visits and increased isolation. In some countries, conjugal visits are not allowed to women in prison or are more restricted than for male prisoners. Moreover, female prisoners are often over-classified or detained in a facility that does not correspond to their classification and where fewer or no programmes are offered with regard to

⁷ <http://www.saflii.org/cgi-bin/disp.pl?file=za/cases/ZACC/2007/18.html&query=%20M%20v%20S>

rehabilitation and reintegration. They usually have few opportunities for transfer and little access to a true minimum security institution.

At the same time, more often than not **prison infrastructure and personnel** are oriented towards a male prison population, overlooking the specific needs of female detainees. The lack of female staff to attend and supervise women prisoners and the lack of training on their specific needs aggravate disadvantages faced by female prisoners.

Women prisoners have greater primary **healthcare needs** in comparison to men. Special health conditions of women (even more so those from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds) may have been untreated before admission due to discrimination in accessing adequate healthcare services in the community. Due to the typical background of women prisoners, which can include injecting drug use, sexual abuse, violence, sex work and unsafe sexual practices,

a significant number of women are infected with STDs, including HIV and hepatitis, at the time they enter prison.

Also, women who are admitted to prison are more likely than men to suffer from mental health problems⁸, often as a result of previous domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, and examination by male doctors may put them at risk of re-traumatisation. According to research women prisoners are at higher risk of harming themselves or attempting suicide in comparison to men in prison, due to the higher level of mental illness and substance addiction and the harmful impact of isolation from the community on the mental well-being of women.

The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the **Bangkok Rules**)⁹ were adopted in December 2010 in order to rectify the lack of attention to the needs of female prisoners and gender-sensitive non-custodial alternatives to imprisonment. However, awareness about these standards and progress in their implementation is still lacking.

Good Practice

In the **Russian Federation**, since 2004, due to amendments to the Criminal Code, women prisoners no longer serve sentences in high-security regimes. (*Women in Prison, A Review of the Conditions in Member States of the Council of Europe*, The Quaker Council for European Affairs, February 2007, Part 2, Country Report: The Russian Federation)

In two mother and baby units out of the 13 which exist in the **Russian Federation**, convicted women prisoners live in joint accommodation with their babies and may do so until the baby reaches the age of three (with some flexibility if the mother is due for release within a year). After this the child goes into the care of family members or the appropriate welfare authorities. However, upon release women who wish to be reunited with their children face barriers as they are required to prove that they can provide financial support and accommodation. (Alla Pokras, Penal Reform International, Presentation to the conference *Gender, Geography and Punishment in Comparative Perspective*, held in Oxford (UK), as part of a programme funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, 23 June 2010)

A **Latvian** women's prison is semi-closed and there is a children's home located in a separate building on prison grounds, where children stay until the age of four. Imprisoned women are allowed to stay with their children all the time until the age of one,

and then are allowed to meet their children twice a day for 1.5 hours. Once children reach the age of four they are either placed in the care of relatives or in other children's homes, which house eight-10 children on any given day. Within a project funded by the Soros Foundation-Latvia, the children's home cooperates closely with the Social Paediatric Centre and has started an innovative parenting skills programme for women prisoners. (*Handbook for Prison Managers and Policymakers on Women and Imprisonment*, UNODC, 2008)

In **Nigeria**, Kirikiri prison in Lagos has been organising a project on preventing HIV/AIDS among female prisoners in the light of global statistics that more than 20 million women are infected worldwide, and Sub-Saharan Africa having the highest figure. The project used peer-education training to create awareness and promote prevention of HIV/AIDS among inmates and prison personnel who act as care givers, developed materials to create awareness, offered pre-and post-test counselling sessions for inmates and prison personnel and provided relief materials such as beverages for infected mother and their babies. The project also provided palliative drugs to infected inmates. (*Survey of United Nations and other Best Practices in the Treatment of Prisoners in the Criminal Justice System, Proceedings of the workshop held at the Twelfth United Nations-Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, Salvador, Brazil, 12–19 April 2010, page 98)

8 E.g. according to a study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistic in 2002 and 2004, mental health problems in prison were found to be much higher among women than men; in the UK, according to research published in 2006, 80 per cent of women prisoners were found to suffer from diagnosable mental health problems, 66 per cent were drug-dependent or used alcohol to dangerous excess, 37 per cent had attempted suicide at some time in their lives (See UNODC *Handbook for prison managers and policy makers on women and imprisonment*, 2008, p. 9).

9 UN-Doc A/C.3/65/L.5, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 December 2010 (A/RES/65/229)

6. Girls in prison

Due to their small numbers, juvenile female prisoners are likely to have even less access to **suitable educational and vocational training** facilities than either adult women or juvenile male prisoners. Any programmes provided for juveniles are likely to have been developed to address the needs of boys.

Also, juvenile female prisoners are even more unlikely to have access to gender-sensitive—and age-appropriate—**healthcare** or counselling for physical or sexual abuse suffered prior to imprisonment.

Pregnant girl prisoners comprise one of the most vulnerable groups in prisons, due to the social stigmatisation to which they may be subjected, their inexperience of dealing with pregnancy and the lack of adequate facilities for pregnant juvenile female prisoners.

Good Practice

In the **United Kingdom**, the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on women in the penal system** has initiated an independent inquiry on girls and the penal system aiming to bring about a reduction in the number of girls who enter the criminal justice system. The inquiry is focusing on policy and practice regarding girls and investigating the decisions that route girls away from or into the criminal justice system. It is looking at how the police and the courts deal with girls who come into contact with the criminal justice system and the different approaches to working with girls, both nationally and internationally. The All Party Parliamentary Group is collating evidence from charities, statutory services and local authorities, examining national government policy and will hear oral evidence in parliament over the coming year.

(<http://www.howardleague.org/appg-inquiry/>)

7. Rehabilitation

Although many problems women face upon release are similar to those of men, the intensity and multiplicity of their post-release needs can be very different. Women are likely to suffer particular discrimination after release from prison, due to **social stereotypes**. They might be rejected by their families and in some countries they may lose their parental rights. If they have left a violent relationship, women will have to establish a new life, which is likely to entail economic, social and legal difficulties, in addition to the challenges of transition to life outside prison.

In many countries, the risk of losing their accommodation and employment upon detention is higher for women, and women offenders are confronted with increased **stigmatisation** as in most

societies they contravene prevailing role models for their sex. They therefore are likely to have particular support requirements in terms of housing, reunification with their families and employment, and will need assistance which is gender-specific.

While a general requirement to apply individual treatment according to the needs of prisoners is enshrined in Rule 69 of the UN Standard Minimum Rules on the treatment of prisoners, pre-release preparation and post-release support policies and programmes are typically structured around the needs of men and rarely address the gender-specific needs of women offenders, with targeted continuum-of-care in the community after release.

Rehabilitation programmes should be designed and made available in prisons specifically for women prisoners, taking into account their gender-specific needs, aiming to address the underlying factors that led to their offence and to cope with the challenges they face as women in prison. Programmes offered should include skills which are not traditionally considered as appropriate for women due to gender stereotyping.

Good Practice

Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) in **Nigeria** conducts weekly literacy and support circle programmes in the Female Prison Kirikiri Lagos to encourage confidence building, self-esteem, and improved communication skills amongst female prisoners. Alternatives to violence training workshops and training in life planning skills are also conducted for ex-prisoners and others in the community by PRAWA. Community-based dress-and soap-making workshops are available for female prisoners in Lagos and Enugu by PRAWA, and a knitting workshop for female ex-prisoners is provided by the Society for the Welfare of Women Prisoners (SWEWP) in Enugu. (Human Rights and Vulnerable Prisoners, PRI Training Manual, No. 1, p. 76)

In **Afghanistan** legal advisers from *Medica Afghanistan* offer mediation services to assist women and girls after being released from prison as many of them experience rejection or threats, being perceived as casting shame upon the family. At the same time, living alone is not an easy option for women in Afghanistan, where it is almost unthinkable to live outside the field of family relations. The mediation between the affected women and their relatives is aimed at easing the process of reintegration.

([http://www.medicamondiale.org/projekte/afghanistan/rechtshilfe-fuer-afghaninen/?L=1](http://www.medicamondiale.org/projekte/afghanistan/rechtshilfe-fuer-afghaninnen/?L=1))

Penal Reform International
First Floor
60–62 Commercial Street
London E1 6LT
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7247 6515
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7377 8711
Email: publications@penalreform.org
www.penalreform.org

PRI is an international non-governmental organisation working on penal and criminal justice reform worldwide. PRI has regional programmes in the Middle East and North Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus. To receive the Penal Reform International (PRI) **monthly newsletter**, please sign up at <http://www.penalreform.org/keep-informed>.