

The background image shows a prison facility. In the foreground, there is a corrugated metal roof. Behind it, a fence with multiple strands of barbed wire is visible. To the right, a guard tower stands on a metal frame, with the number '3' on its side. The sky is a pale blue. The entire image is overlaid with a pattern of light blue and white chevrons pointing towards the right.

2020–2023 Strategy

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It is said that no one truly knows
a nation until one has been inside its jails.

A nation should not be judged by how it treats
its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.

Nelson Mandela

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Foreword

Criminal law, due process and detention practices play core, even emblematic, roles in human rights protection. The decade we are entering will determine whether the world is able to sustain and promote human rights, basic humanity, and international law. The health of criminal justice systems and conditions in prisons are essential indicators of the status of human rights in any country.

Created in 1989, Penal Reform International is therefore more indispensable than ever and in the coming decade will play a key role in the renewal of global human rights because our work reinforces the foundations of the rule of law and good governance.

In PRI's 30 years of existence, we have learned that we believe in more than a set of international human rights standards that guide our work: we believe in a set of values and must live up to these internally and externally. We believe that safe societies are built when the rights of every individual are recognised, whatever criminal

offence they may have committed; we believe societies grow healthier when sentences are proportionate and their primary purpose is rehabilitation, not retribution. Through the priorities highlighted in this strategy and the practical reform approach we offer, we will challenge policies that lead to prison overcrowding and will engage in offering alternatives to detention.

Our values help build safe societies with fair and effective criminal justice systems. The same values also form the core of PRI's operational standards. The way we work impacts the quality of our work, and ultimately the health of the communities with whom we work.

We are an agenda-setting organisation. We take a proactive role with government actors, engaging and convincing them of our agenda by adopting a practical and respectful approach, and building trust and long-term collaboration.

Our presence in various regions adds to the quality and efficiency of our work and helps us achieve sustainable and meaningful change.

PRI's strategy for 2020 to 2023 confirms the strength of our operations and lays out an agenda to meet our objectives.

As PRI enters its fourth decade, we have adopted practical positions designed to enable us to remain effective in the work we do.

We are proud of having a broad, diversified and dedicated donor base that permits us to implement practical criminal justice reform projects in many countries. At the same time, because we receive little institutional funding, like many other organisations we find it increasingly difficult to respond to challenges and remain flexible. We believe that our structural flexibility is an asset. Our fundraising efforts will seek to sustain the long-standing relations of cooperation we have established, foster new engagements

with donors to achieve the priorities of our strategy, and increase contributions from individuals.

The strategy presented here shows how we can flourish in what is often - nationally, regionally and internationally - a dysfunctional and institutionally disrupted political environment. It lays out how we think and affirms PRI's relevance in this environment, building on the strengths we already have.



Penal Reform International today

Penal Reform International (PRI) is an independent international non-governmental organisation that structures its work through a policy programme, regional programmes, and a governance and strategy programme that ensures learning and impact.

Registered in The Netherlands (registration no 40025979), PRI operates globally with offices in multiple locations.

Our vision

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Safe societies worldwide in which fair and effective criminal justice systems are non-discriminatory and protect the rights of disadvantaged people.

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Our mission

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We work to promote criminal justice systems that uphold human rights for all and do no harm.

We run practical human rights programmes and support reforms that make criminal justice fair and effective.

Our primary objectives are to secure trials that are impartial, sentencing practices that are proportionate and promote social rehabilitation, and humane conditions of detention where alternatives to imprisonment are not possible.

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Penal Reform International today

All persons in contact with the criminal justice system are vulnerable because they are subject to the power of the state, on whom they depend to meet their needs and protect their human rights. States must not abuse this power and must protect the human rights of all people who are in contact with their criminal justice systems. The vulnerability of some people is exacerbated by their circumstances and characteristics.

Overall, crime is not rising; however, the number of people in contact with criminal justice systems across the globe, and significantly the number of people in detention, is rising. Overcrowding has become a global problem, thus affecting the health of people in prison and negatively impacting their social rehabilitation. A repressive approach is causing more people to be sentenced to prison, which does not create safer societies. By contrast, criminal justice systems that reject pre-trial detention as a norm, take into account personal pathways to crime, apply proportionate sentences and impose imprisonment only when

necessary, build safer societies and improve respect for the dignity of every human being.

Too often, poverty and social exclusion are factors that lead to offending. Numerous countries have laws and practices that target the poor. Many of the people in pre-trial detention are there because they cannot afford to post bail. Many cannot afford effective legal counsel or, in countries with high levels of corruption in the criminal justice system, cannot afford to pay a bribe to avoid a prison sentence. The poor are also more likely to receive prison rather than non-custodial sentences. People in prison cannot support their families, plunging them further into poverty. Once out of prison, the cycle of deprivation and crime continues: the stigma of a prison sentence can prevent people from obtaining jobs, which may push them to offend again, especially if they believe it is the only way to survive.

PRI supports people in contact with criminal justice systems around the world. For over 30 years, our pragmatic initiatives have benefitted people at every stage of the justice system, from

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Overall, crime is not rising; however, the number of people in contact with criminal justice systems across the globe, and significantly the number of people in detention, is rising.

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pre-trial detention to post-release. We also assist prison and probation staff, judges, police, and national policymakers and practitioners to improve their justice systems. Our purpose is to improve criminal justice systems and structures in order to protect the human rights and address the needs of the people who pass through them.

We have adopted a thematic approach to respond to the needs of these populations and distinguish protection of human rights from the many tools we use to reform penal systems. We challenge laws and sentencing practices that punish behaviours associated with poverty and disadvantage and promote laws and practices that favour the proportionate use of imprisonment and non-custodial sanctions with

a focus on rehabilitation, thereby enabling those who have offended to lead productive lives. Combined, these measures aim to address overcrowding in all jurisdictions.

We believe in a value system of good governance that essentially centres on the principle ‘do no harm’. We seek to prevent the harms that prison and criminal justice systems can cause to those in contact with the law, as well as their families and society at large. We ensure that our own work and our interventions do not cause harm or suffering to those in the criminal justice system. Acknowledging that we work in a challenging environment and are required to witness the harms that criminal justice systems cause, we also endeavour to ensure that our interventions and management do not harm ourselves.

Our values

Our values inform how we approach criminal justice reform and set the tone for how we function internally as an organisation. Our values can be understood in terms of our own definition of good governance.

We bring our values to the reform of criminal justice systems

We are guided by our values in our own work

Do no harm

Our approach to criminal justice reform seeks to prevent the harms that prison and the criminal justice system can cause to those in contact with the law, as well as to their families and society at large.

We have procedures in place to prevent our actions from causing suffering or harm to our beneficiaries or to others in the criminal justice system.

Equality

We promote equal access to justice and fair process for those suspected of having committed criminal offences and those who have committed criminal offences.

We offer paths to address discrimination and intolerance in criminal justice systems.

We actively promote the involvement and participation of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups in efforts to reform and oversee criminal justice systems and ensure respect for their rights.

Transparency

On our activities, our funding and our partners we aim to be as open and accountable as possible with all our stakeholders, including officials in criminal justice systems and governments, and partners with whom we engage.

Humanity

We put humanity at the core of our work for justice and fairness.

Our actions and interventions are motivated by compassion towards others, especially those who face difficulties and challenging situations.

We endeavour to ensure our actions, interventions and management do not harm our staff or partners.

The safety, security and wellbeing of our staff are paramount, and we equip staff to take good care of themselves.

We value diversity and the talents of our staff and the contribution each one makes.

We work to ensure that all staff are treated with respect, regardless of their position in the organisation.

We do not tolerate discrimination or violence against staff, especially on grounds of gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, or sexual identity.

We hold each other accountable, regardless of position in the organisation.

Our policies and regulations are generated via inclusive consultation, are clear and accessible, and apply to all staff.

We work with each other in a spirit of trust, cooperation and good faith, understanding that we all seek the same common goal.

How we work

Human rights standards

We analyse, make recommendations and advocate for principled and fair standards to be developed and adopted internationally and regionally. We promote their implementation nationally and through international monitoring.

Systems & institutions

We support new systems, institutions and practices, which are tailored to the specific country context, through engaging with policymakers and agents of the criminal justice system.

Sustainability

We have a reputation for staying the course in a field where progress can be slow, and use practical projects to demonstrate best practice to advocate for sustainable policy changes.

Monitoring & accountability

We support the capacity, visibility, and political weight of independent monitoring and human rights mechanisms as we believe that national and international monitoring helps to secure accountability.

Partnerships

We engage stakeholders across the criminal justice system, build collaboration with government agencies while upholding our independence, and develop a catalysing relationship with civil society.

Policy development

We engage with policymakers and prison and probation authorities seeking to reform legislation, policy and practice, and bring them in line with international human rights standards.

Learning

Using and analysing data collected through our regional programmes and project evaluations informs our next steps, convinces policymakers to sustain reforms and helps build cohesion across the organisation.

Proximity to contexts

Through our presence in many regions and countries, we are close to national contexts, allowing us to develop and maintain relations with policymakers, prison and probation authorities and civil society.

Research

Our research helps us to understand the current situation, convince policymakers, and develop recommendations appropriate to the specific country, region and context.



Our ambitions for 2020-2023

1. We put people in criminal justice systems at the heart of our work

All persons are vulnerable when they come into contact with a criminal justice system, face criminal proceedings, are in detention, or re-enter society after time spent in prison. Yet many systems continue to be designed for a homogeneous population and are discriminatory. They too often ignore needs and vulnerabilities that are due to differences of circumstance, individual characteristics, or identity.

While we advocate for the protection of all people in contact with the criminal justice system, we will put particular efforts in ensuring that governments and criminal justice agencies recognise

the needs and character of specific groups who require a distinct approach to protect their rights because they are especially at risk of violence or neglect.

We shape, publicise and implement international human rights standards that protect populations who face particular risks.

We recognise intersectionality and the overlapping identities and circumstances of certain groups and will take this into account especially when developing practical reform programmes.

In 2020-2023 will specifically focus on the following populations.

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Many criminal justice systems continue to be designed for a homogeneous population and are discriminatory.

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Women

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To design and promote women-specific criminal justice systems.

We will address the continued rise in the number of women affected by criminal justice systems, including the growing number of women who are imprisoned, knowing that the majority are detained for petty, non-violent offences, often as a result of discrimination, deprivation or violence. We will press criminal justice systems to take account of the specific characteristics of women and adopt gender-sensitive approaches to meet their needs and protect their human rights.

Children and young adults

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To build justice systems for children and address the needs of young adults.

We will work internationally to challenge the unnecessary imprisonment of children and young adults, which can cause long-term psychological and physical harm as well as social, educational, and economic disadvantage, isolation from family and community, stigmatisation, and put children and young adults at risk of torture or physical and emotional abuse. Detention should only be used as a last resort for children. We will increase the attention given to young adults in conflict with the law. It is vital to ensure that they have access to appropriate rehabilitation programmes and that their sentences are proportionate.

Older people

We will press criminal justice systems to take fuller account of the needs of older people at sentencing, during detention and at release, and ensure that their rights are not neglected.

LGBTQ+ people

We will work to ensure that LGBTQ+ persons¹ who are in contact with criminal justice systems are better protected, knowing that many countries criminalise same sex relationships and that LGBTQ+ people in detention face discrimination and may face physical and sexual violence or threats of violence from both detention officials and other people in detention.

People with disabilities

We will press governments to uphold international human rights standards when people with disabilities come into contact with criminal justice systems. We will aim to make their detention a last resort, and will work to ensure that their needs are met in detention and they are protected from violence.

Ethnic and religious minorities

We will work to stop discrimination against ethnic or religious minorities by criminal justice systems, including by increasing the diversity of staff, especially prison staff.

Foreign nationals and people without proof of identity

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To respond to discrimination in law and in practice against foreign nationals, stateless persons, and persons that have no identified nationality.

We will work with criminal justice systems to make them responsive to the needs of foreign nationals. We will increase our efforts to ensure respect for the human rights, especially the procedural rights, of stateless persons and individuals without an identified nationality who are in contact with criminal justice systems or who are criminalised because of their status.

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Specific groups require a distinct approach to protect their rights because they are especially at risk of violence or neglect.

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1. LGBTQ+ stands for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer+'. For the purposes of PRI's work to protect the rights of this group of prisoners and detainees, we include those who identify as LGBTQ+ and those who do not but whose behaviour leads others to perceive them as LGBTQ (for example, men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women). We recognise that the group is not homogenous and that it can be confusing to conflate gender with sexual identity.

Our ambitions for 2020-2023

2. We want to address key trends in criminal justice systems

Our priority will be to address key trends in criminal justice systems, and build systems that do no harm and protect the human rights of people who have contravened the law.

PRI has identified key developments in criminal justice systems globally. We aim to address these in the coming period to ensure that persons who enter the criminal justice system experience no more harm than their detention or non-custodial sanctions necessitate. We will work to ensure that responses to crime and treatment of people who have offended are proportionate and humane. Recognising that many criminal justice systems are fundamentally discriminatory, and target behaviours linked to poverty, we will seek to remove or reform laws that allow for such discrimination.

In the next four years, we will prioritise the following areas in our national and international work.

Challenge life sentences and pursue abolition of the death penalty

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To focus international attention on the rise in life sentences across the globe and their problematic implementation. We will continue to call for the global abolition of the death penalty.

We will collaborate with others to raise awareness of the impact on human rights of life sentences. To protect the rights of prisoners sentenced to life, we will lead civil society action to strengthen relevant international human rights standards, including procedural rights standards. We will continue to join efforts to abolish the death penalty, which is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and a violation of the right to life.

Ensure protection of persons in detention who are at risk from natural disasters

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To deepen understanding of the precarity of people in detention when natural disasters occur, and to work nationally to develop best practices in preparedness and post-disaster response, to ensure that persons in detention who are at risk from natural disasters are protected.

Given that the effects of climate change are likely to increase in frequency and scale, we will work to develop human rights-based disaster and emergency preparedness plans, especially in countries of the Global South and the Global North that need support in this area.

Increase awareness of the right to health and the need for healthcare in detention

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To work with multidisciplinary platforms to protect the right to health for people in detention settings.

We will support the right to health at every stage of the criminal justice system, particularly in places of detention, and will work to ensure that those in detention are not offered a lower standard of healthcare than the rest of the population. We see overcrowding as having an enormous negative impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of people in prison. We will promote the provision of health services that are independent of and separate from prison administrations. We will work to equip prison staff with the tools they need to protect the health of detainees in their care.

Seek to remove or reform laws that criminalise behaviours that are deemed anti-social or are associated with low socio-economic status

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To demonstrate the ineffectiveness of laws that criminalise the poorest members of society or certain behaviours that are deemed anti-social.

Through advocacy and by demonstrating their negative impact, we will raise awareness of criminal laws that implicitly or explicitly target the poor or target behaviour that is deemed anti-social, including certain low level drug offences. We will collaborate with expert groups, civil society organisations, and other concerned groups to advocate for proportionate, fair and non-discriminatory policies.

Use of technology, IT and artificial intelligence

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To extend our capacity to apply and understand the use of technology and artificial intelligence in criminal justice systems, with a view to providing guidance to justice actors and preventing or mitigating harmful impacts that technology may have on the human rights of people in criminal justice systems.

Technology, information technology and artificial intelligence can help to create more efficient and fairer criminal law systems; they may also unfairly target certain populations or impact the realisation of basic rights. After undertaking research into this issue to deepen our knowledge, we will develop policy guidance and work with governments and international actors to spread good practices that mitigate or prevent uses of technology that harm human rights.



Our ambitions for 2020-2023

3. We will work practically to create fair and effective criminal justice systems

We promote practical reform of criminal justice systems to bring about systematic and comprehensive change.

We apply international standards that promote alternatives to detention and, where detention is necessary, improved and humane conditions. We seek to ensure that, at a minimum, criminal justice systems do not cause damage to individuals' lives and have rehabilitation at their heart.

In the next four years, we will promote reform in the following areas.

Prevent torture and ill-treatment

Torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is universally prohibited but continues to be used in places of detention as well as police custody and during interrogation, making the chances of a fair trial impossible. Torture and ill-treatment destroy a person's dignity, body and mind. The effects are lasting, often irreversible, and devastate the individuals affected and their families. We will continue to give guidance and will support efforts to develop the capacity and status of monitoring and complaint mechanisms.

Extend appropriate diversion and non-custodial alternatives to imprisonment

We will challenge the automatic recourse to imprisonment in response to offending, which is a factor in the overcrowding of prisons around the globe. There is little evidence to support the view that prison sentences deter or reduce recidivism.

We will promote the use of non-custodial sentences, including probation and community service, and ensure that these options are meaningful, address offending behaviour, meet the needs and circumstances of at-risk groups, and are acceptable to victims and society.

Develop the provision of rehabilitation and reintegration

A primary purpose of a sentence, whether it involves a prison term or non-custodial sanction, is to reduce reoffending through rehabilitation. Rehabilitation addresses the reasons for criminal behaviour and improves the lives of those who have offended, enabling them to lead law-abiding lives. We will support the efforts of prison administrations, probation services and civil society to develop rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that are gender and age-sensitive.

Reduce use of pre-trial detention, improve detainee access to legal aid, and raise the quality of legal aid

Roughly one in three of the world's prison population is a pre-trial detainee who has not been convicted of a crime. The excessive use of pre-trial detention is a primary contributor to prison overcrowding. Many remain in this position because there are no alternatives or because they cannot afford to post bail. We will press states to impose pre-trial detention only in exceptional circumstances, in line with international human rights standards, and assist states to develop and promote alternatives, provide legal aid, and ensure that places of pre-trial detention are monitored effectively by independent monitoring bodies.

Tackle the excessive use of solitary confinement

An individual placed in solitary confinement is detached from the main prison population and deprived of meaningful human contact. Solitary confinement should not last for more than 15 days and should be used only in exceptional cases as a last resort, as prescribed by law. In certain cases, it is prohibited entirely. Solitary confinement can severely harm a person's mental health with effects that persist long after solitary confinement ends.

We will work to limit the use of solitary confinement by raising awareness of its effects and risks, promoting legal reforms, and developing guidelines for prison staff on humane prison management.

Prevent radicalisation in prison

Radicalisation in prisons can occur when detainees come into contact with already radicalised individuals who have been convicted. They can spread their ideas more easily to others if places of detention have poor conditions, offer few meaningful activities, or staff mistreat or torture detainees.

We will work to ensure that people imprisoned for so-called violent extremism are treated in accordance with international standards and have access to appropriate rehabilitation programmes that address their behaviour.

Improve the working conditions of prison staff

Improving the working conditions and wellbeing of prison staff is an often-overlooked component of criminal justice reform efforts. Prison staff play a key role in efforts to successfully rehabilitate people in prison. It is therefore vital to ensure that they too are treated with respect, that the challenges they face are acknowledged and addressed, and that they have access to the resources they need to do their jobs well.

We will promote better conditions for prison staff, including ensuring provision for their health and wellbeing and support for their professional development. Prison overcrowding also negatively impacts the working conditions of prison staff.

Promote measures to prevent corruption

Acknowledging that corruption is widespread in criminal justice systems and that it is a significant barrier to achieving fair and effective justice, we will mainstream action to tackle corruption in all our projects and activities. Because this is a highly sensitive and complex issue, we will take a diplomatic approach that focuses on finding solutions.

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Prison staff play a key role in efforts to successfully rehabilitate people in prison.

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Our ambitions for 2020-2023

4. We engage with a variety of stakeholders

To make our work successful, impactful and sustainable, we will continue to develop strong ties with a variety of actors.

Our independence and specialised expertise make us a valued partner for governments, parliaments and state agencies, independent state bodies, international organisations, and national and international civil society organisations. We have a reputation for staying the course in a field where progress can be slow, and for remaining independent in our relationships with external stakeholders.

Governments

We will continue to build collaboration with government agencies, while upholding our independence, PRI's values, international human rights standards, and principles of good governance. We collaborate with officials throughout the criminal justice system, including those responsible for law enforcement, judicial functions, and prison administration, and (where they exist) their professional organisations. We work with law enforcement bodies because we recognise their critical role in criminal justice systems.

In all countries where we are active, we:

- **Act transparently** and openly, but hold privileged information confidential.
- **Encourage cooperation** with inter-governmental human rights and civil society bodies.
- **Build the capacity** of, and communication between, criminal justice actors.
- **Communicate directly** with governments and parliaments, participate in reporting processes, and support dissemination and implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of national and international monitoring bodies.
- **Seek to agree** written terms of cooperation with government agencies.

Our work with governments should never cause harm. We will ensure that, when we engage with public authorities, we are able to document a genuine will to reform. We will further document how our work contributes to the broader human rights agenda, to strengthening the rule of law, and to judicial independence.

Independent national and international monitoring mechanisms

Our ambition for 2020-2023

We believe that national and international monitoring helps to secure accountability. We want to cooperate more with both national independent bodies and international mechanisms, in order to improve cooperation and see change at the national level.

We firmly believe in the value of independent national monitoring mechanisms. Those relevant to our mandate, funded when possible through state budgets, include national human rights institutions that comply with the Paris Principles, National Preventive Mechanisms established under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

International mechanisms also play a critical role in holding criminal justice systems to account and preventing impunity.

In all the countries in which PRI works, one of our priorities is to strengthen independent monitoring mechanisms by working to increase their capacity, visibility, and political weight.

We believe that interaction between international human rights expert bodies and states can generate roadmaps for reform of criminal justice systems that align with the human rights obligations that states have ratified. We will work actively with international mechanisms and will advise governments on how they can implement their recommendations. We also plan to report to review mechanisms systematically and constructively, including on the progress and implementation of reform projects in which PRI is involved.

Civil society

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To be a trustworthy partner of national and international civil society organisations. We will share our expertise and knowledge and will be open about our strategies and views, while respecting the confidentiality of sensitive information.

In all the countries in which we work, we wish to be a non-competitive international partner of national civil society. We aim to have a catalysing relationship with independent non-governmental groups in all countries where we work, including them in our agenda and building their capacities in fields relevant to PRI's mandate. We will establish formal partnerships with independent organisations to implement practical reform projects. We want to engage, and share our expertise with civil society organisations that work on issues linked to criminal justice, such as poverty alleviation, as part

of a broad and innovative strategy to address the root causes of deep-seated global problems.

We will continue to cooperate with international non-governmental organisations wherever appropriate and wherever we can add value. We want to be valued as a partner that shares information proactively and transparently, and will contribute actively to coalitions we join.

Building PRI's constituency

We want to grow PRI's constituency, while consolidating our relationships with the many partners we already have. These relationships with practitioners, academics, penal reformers, and human rights defenders, as well as judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, prison and probation staff and correction specialists, are an exceptional source of strength. Our aim is to further widen and enrich our constituency while affirming PRI's human rights-based approach with all those who collaborate with us.

Our development

Despite shrinking civil space and political hostility to civil society in many countries, we are convinced that PRI can flourish by making full use of its proven work methods and structure.

PRI's further development will enable us to set a strong criminal justice reform agenda and contribute to global renewal of human rights.

Our work is evidence-based and will address identified needs. We engage in countries in which we believe we have the opportunity to make change happen.

1. Governance and organisational structure

Our ambition for 2020-2023

Convinced that our strength issues from our collaboration across the regions in which we work and learning from each other, we want to solidify our work as one organisation, having one board, one budget, and one set of accounts that reflect all the projects undertaken in all the regions in which we work. All offices are registered as branches of PRI.

PRI is an independent international non-governmental organisation that operates through its policy programme and regional programmes, and ensures learning and impact through its governance and strategy programme.

PRI operates globally through offices in multiple locations. We value the diversity of our global presence but to achieve the objectives we lay out in this strategy will also ensure that our programmes are well-coordinated.

Our governing document is PRI's Constitution, which sets out its objects, mission and powers as a registered association. The organisation is governed by the General Board, which determines in general terms PRI's policy.

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We engage in countries in which we believe we have the opportunity to make change happen.

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Our development

2. Our programmes

PRI structures its activities through interrelated and complementary programmes.

Policy programme

PRI's international policy programme frames our approach to implementing the objectives set out in this strategy. The programme leads PRI's international advocacy and co-operates with regional and country programmes to transform practical reform projects into systemic change nationally. The programme ensures organisation-wide policy cohesion and oversees all thematic policy work.

Regional and country programmes

Through our presence in many regions, we are close to national contexts. This enables PRI to develop practical projects that respond to current needs and ensure impact. Regional and country programmes translate international human rights standards and norms into national contexts and spread best practice to protect the human rights of vulnerable and at-risk populations in the criminal justice system. The regional and country programmes work collaboratively to share learning across different national contexts.

Governance and strategy programmes

The governance and strategy programme builds cohesion and ensures learning across the organisation. The programme uses data from regional programmes to serve our policy programme, measures the impact of our work, and helps engage PRI's constituency in its work. It ensures that financial regulations are respected and that all PRI's regional and country programmes operate in accordance with PRI's regulations, policies and constitution.

We recognise that many of our staff work in complex or high-risk environments. They face pressure and experience stress at work. Through our governance and strategy programme, we will support staff and foster a culture that enables open discussion of staff wellbeing and self-care.



Our development

3. Where we work

Our work is relevant in all settings, in high-income countries in the Global North and middle and low-income countries in the Global South.² We can contribute to building trust in state institutions by shaping a fair and effective criminal justice system, including in countries with unstable political institutions.

Our organisational model is flexible, enabling us to reach our objectives and ensure efficient collaboration across the organisation while remaining centred in our legal personality registered in The Netherlands. We work through country missions, regional hubs, remote coordination, and through partners.

For each region, we will develop regional implementation plans that highlight thematic and country objectives for 2020-2023.

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To continue to work in Central Asia, Europe and South Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa. In the period 2020 to 2023, we will focus our regional development work in East Africa, Central Africa and francophone West Africa.

We will seize political opportunities

We will take initiatives when political opportunities arise. We base our engagement in countries and regions on our own needs' assessments and feasibility studies, independent from national actors and potential donors.

We believe that countries undergoing reform processes should make reform of the criminal justice system central. Reform processes can create important opportunities for change in a field that frequently evolves very slowly.

We will work in humanitarian crisis settings

We believe that the human rights of people in criminal justice systems must be protected in all settings, including humanitarian crises. In such situations, detainees are often seen as a secondary priority. We strongly believe that the construction of fair and effective criminal justice systems should be a key component of efforts to rebuild trust in state institutions after crises.

We will continue to engage in humanitarian crises.

Countries in conflict

When a conflict breaks out or worsens, we will aim to remain engaged in the country. We will only work in such settings when we have extensive knowledge of the country, a long-standing engagement in the country, and are trusted by a plurality of actors, including state agents, civil society actors and international development and aid agencies present in the country. Our action will be complementary to humanitarian relief efforts and will focus on strengthening the ability of criminal justice institutions to adapt to the emergency, reform themselves, and contribute to peace and stability. Decision-making at the highest level of the organisation will be strongly guided by concerns about staff security and safety.

² The term 'Global South' refers to countries in Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean which are classified by the World Bank as low or middle income.

Our development

International stabilisation programmes

Our ambition for 2020-2023

To intensify our work in stabilisation and peacebuilding settings and increase the value of criminal justice reform in such settings.

In these contexts, we will cooperate closely with international efforts because stabilising and rebuilding the criminal justice system is an indispensable pillar of building peace and democratic institutions. Founded on both our experience and documented evidence, we believe strongly that the success of reconciliation efforts, as well

as efforts to curb impunity for crimes committed during conflicts and efforts to increase trust in the state, are closely linked to the success of efforts to reform and strengthen criminal justice institutions and ensure they are fair and effective. In the context of this work, we will continue to cooperate with United Nations country presences.

4. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

We work in challenging contexts where meaningful change may take time. It is imperative therefore that we monitor and evaluate what we are doing to ensure that our work remains relevant, efficient and effective. We plan and design our interventions in collaboration with stakeholders and decision makers and develop rigorous and thorough methods to monitor the impact and appropriateness of our activities.

Our close relationships with stakeholders allow us to verify the progress of our work and make adjustments based on emerging needs or changes in the political environment, ensuring that we achieve impact in the most effective manner.

Project and thematic evaluations give us in-depth insight into our work and enable us both to assess the degree to which we are achieving long-term sustainable outcomes and measure our influence on those outcomes.

Learning is embedded throughout our practice and at every stage of the project cycle to ensure that we deliver evidence-based interventions that in turn help us to understand which methodologies work most effectively in the field of criminal justice reform.

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We work in challenging contexts where meaningful change may take time.

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Our development

5. Key principles in the way we operate

We will be gender-sensitive

Equality is one of our values. Our aim is to build gender-sensitive criminal justice systems. As an equal opportunities employer, we give particular attention to creating a workplace free from discrimination or violence based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Regulations governing human resources, staff wellbeing and self-care must guarantee that PRI is a gender-sensitive employer.

We will work to prevent corruption

We do not contribute to or tolerate corrupt practices in any form. Corruption is antithetical to our vision, our mission and our values. We work to achieve criminal justice systems from which corruption has been eliminated, in which all individuals are treated fairly.

We have protocols and policies that prevent corruption and make our staff aware of the behaviours and risks that can result in corruption. We aim to create a safe environment at PRI with effective procedures that enable staff to report suspected cases of corruption immediately, enable PRI to investigate them, and ensure appropriate action is taken.

We will give attention to climate change

Our ambition for 2020-2023

We will strengthen collaborative methods to reduce our carbon footprint by reducing air travel and will develop mechanisms to ensure our work tools allow us to minimise negative impacts on the environment.

We work in a field that will be heavily affected in the coming years by climate change. Across the globe, penitentiary systems are challenged to adapt.

Our work also has an effect on the environment, mainly through national and international travel. As a rule, where travel is necessary, it should be by the safest and least environmentally damaging means. We will further reduce the impact of our operations on the environment by subscribing to energy produced locally and through renewable sources wherever possible, reducing consumption of electricity, paper and other office stationery, ensuring that our publications and other materials are printed on renewable or recycled paper with eco-friendly ink, and limiting our IT consumption.

How we mitigate risks

'Changes in the global environment will reduce interest in penal reform'

Our strategy sets out why we believe that penal reform can be at the core of global human rights renewal. We also believe criminal justice is a key component of the rule of law. We will ensure that our communications with key decision-makers underline opportunities to reform criminal justice systems in ways that help to renew human rights and implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

'Operations and staff are threatened by political hostility to human rights NGOs'

We closely monitor political events in all countries in which we work and share information proactively with national and international civil society.

We are open with governments about the work we pursue and do not have hidden agendas. We document how PRI contributes to building safe and secure societies. We believe that civil society activities have value in all societies and add value to our own work.

'Other organisations, including inter-governmental organisations, will take PRI's role'

Our identity is unique and has proved itself for 30 years. We see PRI as a non-competitive international partner of national civil society and inter-governmental organisations. We aim to have a catalysing effect with independent non-governmental groups in all countries in which we work.

We believe that our work with governments and civil society adds value to their efforts to promote penal reform and build fair and effective criminal justice systems.

'It will become increasingly difficult to raise funds, including for core costs'

We will increase our communications with past, potential and current donors. We will draw their attention to global trends and concerns with respect to criminal justice and will pitch PRI as a partner that can make a unique contribution to efforts to tackle the problems that criminal justice systems confront.

We will aim to further diversify our donor base and increase contributions to cross-regional projects and thematic policy programmes.

'PRI will lose institutional memory and expertise, and will be unable to hire expert staff to work in hostile and difficult environments'

We will organise ourselves in a manner that permits PRI to promote collaboration across the organisation and share institutional memory in informal and formal settings. We will make better use of the potential of technology to share and store information.





FAIR AND EFFECTIVE CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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