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Prisoners allegedly released fraudulently: The number of people allegedly involved in the releasing of prisoners through fraudulent documents has increased. Police confirmed that they were looking for a third Johannesburg Magistrate's Court employee believed to have been involved in providing fake documents to the officials at the Department of Correctional Services. The documents indicated that the appeals of the six hijackers and an armed robber, all held at Johannesburg prison, were successful, whereas they were still appealing their prison sentences. The prisoners were released based on the fraudulent documents. Reported by Botho Molosankwe and Gill Gifford, 1 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070801075121952C772692

Nurses sue Department of Correctional Services after being raped by prisoner: Thabo Amos Masinga, 21, who was an inmate at Baviaanspoort prison's youth section on 13 March 2005 allegedly attacked two nurses on duty in the prison hospital, raped them and almost killed them by slitting their throats while under the influence of drugs. The two nurses have instituted a R4,5-million damages claim against the Department of Correctional Services following their harrowing ordeal.

They stated in court papers that they had informed the Department about the dangerous conditions under which they had to work, but no action was taken. 1 August 2007 IOL

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070801030028271C530387 see also

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070801194453267C257762

Prison warders dismissed over Rastafarian dreadlocks: Western Cape secretary of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POCRU), Mncedisi Mbolekwa, said that five warders at Cape Town's Pollsmoor Prison were given dismissal notices because they refused to cut their Rastafarian dreadlocks. Mbolekwa said that the union would take the matter to arbitration and if necessary, to the Constitutional Court. Mbolekwa added that the union was appealing against the dismissal because they saw it as unfounded and unfair, and that it violated the warders' constitutional rights. He also added that what angered the union was that there had for a period of two years been a director at the Regional Commissioner's office in Goodwood who was a Rastafarian and who wore dreadlocks unchallenged. Reported by Sapa, 1 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=594&art_id=nw20070801162614735C176779 see also
<http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=44627,1,22>

Correctional Services Minister sues doctor: A doctor at Pollsmoor who spoke out about horrific health conditions at the prison is being sued for defamation by Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour. The minister is claiming R500 000 in damages from the doctor. Dr Paul Theron was also suspended from his post, leaving the overcrowded prison with just three doctors, and none in Medium A; the juvenile section of about 1 600 inmates where Theron worked. Dr Theron is alleged to have written a letter about a nurse who was suspended and mentioning in that letter that the nurse had been victimised by the Balfour. Reported by Helen Bamford, 4 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070804091516580C634357

Prisoner officials who helped prisoners to escape to be dealt with seriously: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, vowed to take tough action against Departmental officials if investigations prove they assisted more than 10 prisoners to escape from Qalakabusha Prison in Empangeni after cutting through a border fence. Balfour said that it was more likely that the prisoners were helped to escape. Reported by Sabcnews, 5 August 2007, at

http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153607,00.html

Prison officials involved in the escape says Correctional Services Minister: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, said that prison officials must have colluded with the prisoners who escaped from the Qalakabusha Correctional Centre in Empangeni. The Minister made the statement during a two-hour visit to the prison. Reported by Sapa, 6 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070806080642723C148533 see also
<http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3969854>

Prison officials to be suspended after prisoners' escape: Eleven prison officials were to be suspended after the escape of 10 prisoners from the Qalakabusha Prison, in Empangeni, Correctional Services Minister Ngconde Balfour said. The Minister's announcement came a day after the re-arrest of three of the escapees. The Minister said the officials would be suspended for suspected collusion, negligence and unethical behaviour. Reported by Sapa, 8 August 2007, Daily News, at

<http://www.dailynews.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3974298>

SABC and e-tv allowed to broadcast escape images: Both the South Africa Broadcasting Cooperation and e.tv were allowed to air footage showing how 10 inmates "simply walked" out of Qalakabusha prison. The SABC reported that: "It also shows the inmates in full prison garb, lifting their hands in appreciation with an acknowledgement from a warder. The video shows the gates were open by remote control and the obviously nervous prisoners walking back and forth." Reported by Sapa, 8 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070808161338313C278208

Correctional Services Minister angry over prison escapes: An angry Correctional Services Minister, Mr. Ngconde Balfour, visited Empangeni to investigate the circumstances around the escape of 10 dangerous prisoners from the town's Qalakabusha Correctional Centre. During the visit, the Minister said that it was not a question of staff shortage but that it was pure negligence and collusion that led to the escape of these dangerous prisoners. Reported by Chris Jenkins, 8 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070808024348465C447926

Popcru questioned the suspension of warders over prisoners' escape: The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) in KwaZulu-Natal expressed unhappiness about the suspension of 11 prison warders at Qalakabusha prison in Empangeni, before a thorough investigation was completed. Popcru provincial spokesperson Kwenza Nxele said that the comments of the Minister, through the media to them, that the escapes were a result of pure negligence and collusion by the officers on duty, were not constructive and they were not assisting them. Nxele said that suspending members without identifying the problem was not a solution. Reported by sabcnews, 8 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153777,00.html

Video shows prison escapes: Startling video footage of 10 dangerous prisoners walking out of the Qalakabusha Maximum Prison at Empangeni was released to the media. The footage show how the inmates escaped from the facility after walking through approximately six electronic gates. The video also showed the inmates in full prison uniform, lifting their hands in appreciation with an acknowledgement from a warder. The video showed the gates were opened by remote control and the visibly nervous prisoners walking back and forth. They apparently cut through a wire fence before escaping. Reported by sabcnews, 8 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153767,00.html see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070810024716696C640423

Prison hospital manager face charges over expired medicines: Pollsmoor prison hospital manager, Andries Slinger, face a three-day grilling in a disciplinary hearing over charges of "Keeping Expired Medication in Hospital". The charges followed a visit to the prison earlier in 2007 by some members of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services who found expired medicines and a critical shortage of nurses. Slinger, 42, who has 14 years of service as a senior warder with the Department of Correctional Services, suspended for two months with full pay. Reported by Norman Joseph, 10 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070810123816446C661767

Hearing over C-Max escapee rescheduled: A disciplinary hearing for 13 warders suspected of helping Annanias Mathe to escape from prison or being negligent in the matter was rescheduled. Manelisi Wolela of the Department of Correctional Services said the officials were scheduled to re-appear before a departmental disciplinary committee after two days. At the time of his escape from C-Max in Pretoria on November 18 2006, Mathe was awaiting-trial on 51 charges, including rape, robbery and car hijacking. He was re-arrested on December 4 2006 when he hijacked a car at Craighall in Johannesburg. Reported by Sapa, 10 August 2007, Mail & Guardian at http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=316337&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/

Re-arresting escapees wastes police's time: Bheki Cele, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Minister for Community Safety and Liaison, expressed his frustration at the waste of time and money tracking down criminals who should be safely kept behind bars. Cele said he did not want to criticise staff in the Department of Correctional Services, because the police have a close working relationship with many of them, but said such escapes were a cause for concern as police resources were being wasted. Reported by Ayanda Mhlongo, 15 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070815094447690C880104

Prisoners bribed officials for their early release: Seven prisoners, serving prison sentences of more than 15 years each, allegedly paid more than R200 000 for their freedom, the Johannesburg magistrate's court was told when evidence was heard during the bail application of two of the court's clerks who allegedly produced fake court documents allowing Correctional Services officers to release the prisoner ahead of their prescribed prison terms. The investigating officer, Inspector Charles Bachelor, testified that their confidential source had informed the Crime Intelligence Unit that prisoners were paying between R30 000 and R40 000 each for their freedom. Reported by Botho Molosankwe, 15 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070815041618739C616677

National Commissioner outlines institutional strategy to address prison problems: The National Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr. Vernie Petersen, said that his department's overcrowded prisons and growing numbers of longer-term offenders needed to be addressed institutionally. Speaking at the launch of the Department's new integrated human resource strategy, Petersen said that he was optimistic that the Department's

new human resource strategy which would focus on recruitment, development and retention of staff, and rehabilitation of offenders, would help address these problems. Reported by Sapa, 23 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070823202045291C788927

SENTENCING

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Law to allow Regional Courts to impose life sentences under attack: The new minimum sentences bill, which proposes expanding the jurisdiction of the regional courts, came under sustained criticism from organisations which claimed it would clog up court rolls and increase prison overcrowding. The idea was also rejected by the organisations on the basis that regional courts were not equipped to impose life sentences. However, Justice Department official Johan de Lange said that of all the serious crimes so far referred to the High Court only 7% had attracted life sentences. This meant that 93% of the cases tried in regional courts were "needlessly referred", De Lange said. He added that to deal with only 7% going on appeal rather than all 100% being referred for sentencing would considerably improve the situation in the high courts. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 3 August 2007, Business Day, at

<http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A531442>

Researchers question the effectiveness of longer prison terms: Two research papers questioned South Africa's approach to sentencing prisoners, with one saying the increased incidence of sentencing, together with heavier sentences, means there will be serious overcrowding in prisons in 10 years, and the other claiming that longer sentences do not actually reduce crime rates. Chris Giffard and Lukas Muntingh wrote in the latest South African Crime Quarterly that, from the late 1990s to 2005, the increase in the general sentencing tariff played a major role in increasing the prison population. They said that such increases in prisoner population affect the prisoners directly as they find themselves in overcrowded prisons. In another article in the same edition of the South African Crime Quarterly, Michael Tonry, professor of Law and Public Policy at the University of Minnesota, said that comparisons of countries with different sentencing policies and punishment practices show sentencing and punishment have little discernible effect on crime trends and patterns. Reported by Ernest Mabuza, 14 August 2007, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A539187>

PRISONERS' RIGHTS

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Graves found in prison: Graves were discovered at East London's Fort Glamorgan Prison and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Prisoners (SPCP), an organisation that had been observing the exhumation of graves at the prison by a team of archaeologists from Cape Town, believed that they could be those of prisoners killed by warders during apartheid. SPCP Director Sipho Katana, said "We suspect that those graves belong to prisoners who were killed and secretly buried there." He added that the archaeologists would inform the National Prosecuting Authority about the discovery of the graves. Reported by Vuyolwethu Sangotsha, 3 August 2007, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=531132>

Awaiting-trial prisoner commits suicide after failing to escape: The Mpumalanga police said that an awaiting trial prisoner committed suicide in Secunda after a failed escape attempt. Superintendent Abie Khoabane said four prisoners attempted to escape from holding cells after unsuccessfully attacking the police officers. The prisoners were put in single cells and after one day police found the prisoner, a 22-year-old man, hanging from the door of his cell. The man used his clothing bag to hang himself. Reported by Sapa, 6 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20070806194724820C982559 see also <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=45021,1,22>

Prisoners requested to be moved to prison over alleged police torture: Nineteen men arrested with an arsenal of firearms at a White City Jabavu, Soweto, house alleged before the Protea Magistrates' Court that they were tortured and assaulted by the police at the Johannesburg Central Police Station. Their lawyer, Emmanuel Giddion, pleaded with the magistrate to transfer "his clients to the Johannesburg Prison because he feared more torture". Police spokesman Sergeant Sanku Tsunke said they would only conduct an investigation of the alleged assault if the suspects opened a case. The Magistrate postponed the case for further investigations. Reported by Sibongile Mashaba, 10 August 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=536148>

Minister orders that re-arrested escapees should be chained: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, ordered that the rearrested prisoners from a high security prison in Empangeni should be kept in chains for 24 hours. The Minister gave the orders after a combined police task force managed to re-arrest five out of the 10 dangerous prisoners who had escaped from Qalabusha Prison. Balfour also ordered that the suspended warders on duty that day be charged criminally. Reported by Mhlaba Memela, 10 August 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=536150>

Prison facing water and staff shortage: Speaking before the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services was due to visit a correctional services facility in Port Shepstone, Mr. Dennis Bloem said that the Kokstad prison currently houses 450 prisoners, yet it was built to accommodate 1400 of some of the country's most dangerous prisoners. Bloem said that a shortage of water and staff is preventing Kokstad prison from operating at full capacity. Reported by Sapa, 14 August 2007, at <http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=539545> see also http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=594&art_id=vn20070815040509133C407893

Man allegedly arrested by the US in South Africa tortured to death in Pakistan: Saud Memon, a Karachi cloth merchant, was allegedly picked up in Pretoria, South Africa, by US forces after the remains of Daniel Pearl were found on his barren land along the Super Highway. After US investigators failed to find any link between Memon and Pearl's killers, he was handed over to the Pakistani security agencies in January 2006 in Karachi. The 44-year-old was brought before a Supreme Court bench on 4 May that year allegedly on a stretcher, his eyes looking blank and saliva dripping from his mouth. Allegedly weighing only 18 kilograms, Memon met a tragic death in a hospital in Karachi due to alleged mental and physical torture. Reported by Naveed Ahmad, 15 August 2007, ISN, at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=17984>

Prisoner reports warders to police over assault: A 26-year-old prison inmate opened a case of assault against eight warders at Heidelberg prison. Mduduzi Dlamini of Standerton in Mpumalanga was allegedly beaten by the warders for complaining that the other inmates had used his toiletry while he was asleep. Heidelberg police spokesman, Thivhulawi Tshilate, confirmed that a case of assault has been opened but said that no arrests had been made yet. Reported by Mfundekelwa Mkhulisi, 20 August 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=543359>

Prisoner's plea against transfer struck from the role: A bid by a prisoner, Bruce Ehrlich, to stop Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, from transferring him to a prison outside East London, was struck from the Grahamstown High Court roll. Ehrlich's application sought to prevent Balfour and two other respondents from transferring him from the East London facility to any other prison outside of the city's magisterial district because, according to him, such a transfer would be unlawful and an attempt to frustrate due legal process. On behalf of the Minister and the two other respondents it was argued that the reason for Ehrlich's transfer was that the East London correctional facility was being reclassified to a maximum security institution, and Ehrlich was categorised as a medium security prisoner and would be transferred with other medium security prisoners. Reported by Sapa, 23 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070823153718867C934487

Prisoner unsuccessfully appeals against sentence after 9 years: In December 1998, Michael Bongkole, then 23, was sentenced to prison for 13 years for aggravated armed robbery, and escaping while serving a prison sentence. When he appeared in the Bellville Regional Court in mid-August, he still had four years to go, but with the prison remissions, it was likely that he had already completed the prison sentence. However, he was serving another

sentence for a different offence and while appearing before the court he wished to appeal the 13-year prison sentence after spending nine years in prison. In the papers before the Court he claimed that the robbery in 1998 did not happen and that his guilt in the 1998 case had not been proven beyond reasonable doubt. The magistrate dismissed the application and said even if he allowed Bongkole's application for leave to appeal, it would serve no purpose as he had already served the sentence, or almost. Reported by Sapa, 24 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=nw20070824141936953C328067

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Prisoners escape from KwaZulu-Natal prison: The police said that nine prisoners had escaped from the Qalakabusha Prison at Empangeni in KwaZulu-Natal. Police Spokesperson, Senior Superintendent Phindile Radebe, said the prisoners escaped from the prison yard after cutting through a fence. She was not sure whether the prisoners had escaped on Saturday night or Sunday morning. The escapees were serving life sentences for murder, armed robbery and other crimes. Reported by Sapa, 5 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070805151606842C426967

Number of escapes rises to 10 and Department of Correctional Services to probe the escapes: A team of top officials from the Department of Correctional Services were to be sent to the Qalakabusha Correctional Centre in Empangeni to investigate the escape of 10 inmates. Correctional Services Department spokesperson, Manelisi Wolela, said the team would not include officials from that prison. He said the Department would issue a full statement as well as pictures of the escapees. The 10, aged between 28 and 35, escaped by cutting through a fence in the prison yard and driving off in a blue Volkswagen Polo. Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, said that prison officials must have colluded with the prisoners. The Director of Justice for Prisoners and Detainees Trust (JPDT), Mr. Derrick Mdluli, said that corruption within South Africa's correctional facilities was rife and that prisons were secure and prisoners could only escape with a warder's help. Reported by Sapa, 6 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070806150414651C945712 see also <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=44971,1,22>

Shortage of staff contributed to prison escapes: Mr. Dennis Bloem, the Chairperson of the Portfolio on Committee on Correctional Services, blamed the Correctional Services Department for the escape of ten inmates from Qalakabusha prison in Empangeni. Bloem attributed the number of escapes to the shortage of staff which, he said, the Department is failing to address. He added that almost all escapes occur over weekends because the escapees are aware that prisons are operating with skeleton staff during these periods. Reported by Sabcnews, 6 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153633,00.html

Reward offered for information leading to the arrest of prisoners who escaped: KwaZulu-Natal police issued a reward of R20 000 per prisoner for information which may lead to the arrest of ten inmates who escaped from Qalakabusha prison in Empangeni. During a visit to the prison, Mr. Ngconde Balfour, Correctional Services Minister, said prison officials must have colluded with the escapees. Qalakabusha prison is one of the South Africa's most secure prisons. Balfour said that initial indications were that some warders were not in their designated posts at the time. Doors were also suspected to have been left unlocked. Reported by Sabcnews, 6 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153618,00.html

Three escaped prisoners arrested: Three of the prisoners who escaped from Empangeni's Qalakabusha prison arrested after two days on the run. Police Director, Phindile Radebe, said two of the men were arrested in Mtubatuba and another in Esikhaweni, about 15 kilometres south of Richards Bay. Reported by Sapa, 7 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070807155930288C629578 see also <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=534831>

Arrested escapees appeared in court: Three of the ten men who escaped from the Qalakabusha prison appeared

in the Empangeni Magistrate's Court. The three escapees were remanded in custody until 7 September 2007. The Department of Correctional Services issued a statement and said that the three men would be detained at Kokstad maximum security prison. The Department also said that 13 Correctional Services officials had been served with letters of suspension. The Department said a team made up of prisons officials, police and the National Intelligence Agency had begun its investigations into the escapes. Reported by Sapa, 8 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070808191304767C217623

One escaped prisoner shot dead: One of the 10 prisoners who escaped from Qalabusha prison was shot dead by police and another re-arrested at Hluhluwe, on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast. KwaZulu-Natal police spokesperson Superintendent Phindile Radebe said it was believed that the two were on their way to cross the Swaziland border. The two inmates were at a garage along the N2 when they were found by the police. One of them allegedly pulled out a gun and fired shots at the police who returned fire, killing him instantly. Reported by Sapa, 9 August 2007, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070809072029647C168073 see also http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153802,00.html

Fifth of the 10 escapees arrested: The fifth prisoner who escaped from Empangeni's Qalabusha prison had been arrested. Police spokesperson, Phindile Radebe, said that the police confronted three of the escaped inmates in KwaMsane near Hluhluwe on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast. She said two managed to flee, but one was arrested after being wounded allegedly during a shoot-out with police. He was taken to the prison hospital. Reported by Sabcnews, 10 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153852,00.html

Sixth of the 10 escapees arrested: The sixth of 10 prisoners who escaped from KwaZulu-Natal's Qalabusha prison was apprehended. Superintendent Phindile Radebe said that Phiwahlahla Mbatha, 30, who was serving 20 years for armed robbery, was tracked down to a Caltex garage in KwaMsane in the KwaBhoboza area of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. He was shot in the knee after allegedly firing at police during his arrest. Reported by Sapa, 10 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070810115340729C474541

Police optimistic that remaining escapees would be arrested: While commenting on the steps taken and the achievements made in re-arresting some of the 10 prisoners that escaped from the Qalabusha Prison in Empangeni, police spokesperson Superintendent Vincent Mdunge said: "The hunt is still on for the four remaining prisoners. We know they haven't gone far." He added that police would continue searching for the men in KwaZulu-Natal, but were keeping an "open mind" about their whereabouts. Police set up a task team to track down the prisoners. Reported by Irene Kuppan, 13 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070813100550428C597461

Prisoners escape from court: Gauteng police said that five prisoners escaped from the Tembisa Magistrate's Court holding cells during the court recess. The five were appearing in court for crimes including murder, attempted murder, armed robbery and car hijacking. The police spokesperson Captain Manyadza Ralidzhivha said that one of the escapees was re-arrested and appealed to the public to report to the nearest police station should they have any information about the whereabouts of the four men. Reported by news24, 21 August 2007, at http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2168379,00.html

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Correctional Services Act to be amended: Parliament is in the processes of amending the Correctional Services Act. The proposed amendments will amongst other things increase the Minister's powers in determining how much of a sentence should be served before parole. It also changes the institution of the Inspecting Judge of Prisons to the Inspector-General of Correctional Services. No longer will this individual need to be a judge. Instead it may be someone with 10 years' of legal experience. Sentenced prisoners will be called inmates and prisons correctional centres. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 31 July 2007, Business Day, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707310205.html>

Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services visits prisons: The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services visited three prisons in Gauteng Province. The committee visited the Modderbee Prison in Benoni, Nigel Prison and Johannesburg prison. Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, said that visits also aimed to inform the Committee on community corrections and discussions with the parole boards. During the visit, the Committee also aimed at having discussions with staff and prisoners about their problems and concerns. Reported by Sapa, 5 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070805152955332C217320

Committee to contact Parliament over overcrowded and understaffed prisons: The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, after visits to Modderbee prison, Nigel prison and Devon prison in Gauteng, said that it was evident that prison conditions were unfavourable. Mr. Bloem added that serious changes were needed for South Africa's overcrowded and understaffed prisons. During the visit, the Committee members interacted with prisoners and staff during . Modderbee prison, which was built to house 2 492 inmates held 4 860 prisoners, of which 2 971 who were serving sentences and 1 879 were awaiting trial. Mr. Bloem also reportedly said that "We also found that critical staff were also very low, for example, Modderbee only had 9 nurses, two social workers, 4 teachers, and did not have any in-house psychologists." He said that the committee was going to approach Parliament and attempt to alleviate the problems. Reported by Sapa, 9 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070809163754742C233088 see also

<http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=45319,1,22>

Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services to inspect prison over escapes: The Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services was to conduct its own inspection at Qalakabusha Prison in Empangeni from where a group of prisoners escaped. The Chairperson of the Committee, Mr. Dennis Bloem, said that the aim of the inspection was to get first-hand information to prepare the Committee ahead of the briefing by the Department of Correctional Services. Bloem said that the Committee would also look at the routes the inmates used to escape. Reported by Sabcnews, 15 August 2007, at

http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,154109,00.html

Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services said prison escapes "unacceptable": In a statement issued by, Mr. Dennis Bloem, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services after their visit to Empangeni's Qalakabusha Correctional Centre, from where 10 prisoners escaped in early August, Mr. Bloem said that the escapes "should never have happened". Mr. Bloem said that the escapes compromised the obligation placed on the Correctional Services Department by the Constitution to imprison inmates under safe conditions, and to protect the public from convicted criminals. Reported by Chris Jenkins, 16 August 2007, IOL, at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070816044735250C861966

"Hardened and difficult" prisoners transferred: The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, said that the first of a batch of 200 dangerous prisoners had started arriving in Kokstad. Mr. Bloem said that there were enough "hardened and difficult" prisoners to fill Kokstad. Reported by Daily News Correspondent, 17 August 2007, Daily News, at

<http://www.dailynews.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3988217>

HIV/AIDS

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HIV is one of the biggest problems in African prisons: While meeting at the Ezulwini Convention Centre in Swaziland, nineteen heads of correctional services in Africa vowed to work together continuously towards finding solutions for the challenges facing African prisons. They agreed that overcrowding, HIV/AIDS, the slow justice system and inadequate medical care are the major problems facing African prisons. The new chairperson of the Conference of Eastern, Southern and Central African (Cesca) Heads of Correctional Services, Mnguni Simelane, said

that the resolutions from this conference will help to make their penal institutions more effective and efficient. Lesotho's Correctional Services Head of Health Unit, Phoka Scout, said that educating inmates about the dangers of engaging in sexual activities is the only way to address the high HIV infection rate in the African prisons. Reported by Sabcnews, 11 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,153912,00.html

OTHER

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Prisoner called for the resignation of a judge: A prisoner serving 25 years at Westville Prison joined the Young Communist League (YCL) in calling for the immediate resignation of KwaZulu-Natal's Judge President, Vuka Tshabalala. The prisoner, Russel Ngubo, an alleged former gang boss at Pietermaritzburg Prison and now an inmate at Westville, was jailed for 25 years for three murders by judge Tshabalala. The prisoner said that one of the reasons why the judge should resign is that he had sent many people to prison and that such people are free after appealing the judge's decisions. Reported by Canaan Mdletshe, 8 August 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=534911>

Continent Correctional Services body established: A Ministerial Council of African Correctional Services Association Champions (Mincac) was established with the objective of bringing about greater cooperation on correctional services in Africa. South African Correctional Services communications spokesperson, Phumlani Ximiya, said that the establishment of Mincac was one of the key resolutions approved at the Eastern, Southern and Central African Heads of Corrections Conference in Swaziland in early August. Reported by Sabcnews, 15 August 2007, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,154126,00.html

64 children in prisons with their mothers: There are currently 64 children under the age of five living in prison with their mothers and one of the proposals contained in the Correctional Services Amendment Bill, which is being considered by the National Assembly's Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, is that such mothers will stay with their children until the age of two. The Director for the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons, Mr. Gideon Morris, said that 84 percent of the almost 2 500 female prisoners were mothers. He added that after the children left their imprisoned mothers, they went into foster care, to a place of safety or to live with relatives. Reported by Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, 25 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070825090953278C938240

Judge orders prison warders to bring prisoners before court: Confusion and a lack of communication among prison officials led to a delay in the commencement of former Hard Livings gang leader Rashied Staggie's murder trial in the Cape High Court. When it was time for the case hearing, the judge realised that the prisoners were not in court and ordered the prison warders to produce them immediately. The judge warned all involved that he would not tolerate unnecessary delays. Reported by Sapa, 28 August 2007, The Citizen, at <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=46584,1,22>

REHABILITATION

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Prisoners to make furniture as part of rehabilitation for a poor family: Correctional Services Minister, Mr. Ngconde Balfour, said that the furniture for a house being built by the SABC and others in Khayelitsha outside Cape Town is to be made at workshops at the Drakenstein prison. The beneficiary of the house, a woman, has a mentally unstable husband and a young daughter who is a rape survivor. The family was living in a shack which was later flattened by a stolen vehicle during a car chase. The Minister said that "when we listened to the story of that mamma with her child, we really had to get involved. We are a caring department and we felt as we rehabilitate offenders, this is part of paying back through rehabilitation." Reported by Sabcnews, 18 August 2007, at

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Swaziland

African prisons provide limited access to ARVs: A study conducted by UNAIDS revealed that despite the fact that homosexuality, rape and other forms of sexual violence are common in African prisons and being the main factors causing the high HIV infection rate in African prisons, African prisons still provide very limited anti-retroviral treatment to prisoners despite the high HIV infection rate. A UNAIDS study has revealed that while most of the sex in prisons was consensual, rape and sexual abuse were often used to exercise dominance in the culture of violence that is typical of prison life. The study was unveiled at the 8th CESCA biennial conference that took place at the Convention Centre at Ezulwini, Swaziland take took place in early August. Reported by Hlengiwe Ndlovu, 9 August 2007, the Swazi Observer, at <http://www.observer.org.sz/main.php?id=37075§ion=main>

Prisons chiefs disagreed on prison workers' unions: Prison chiefs from across the continent expressed mixed feelings about the formation of prison workers' unions. The Nigerian Commissioner of Correctional Services, Olussola Ogundipe, said he was strongly against the formation of unions within correctional services and other essential service providers including military and para-military forces. On the other hand, his Ugandan counterpart, Senior Superintendent of Prisons, Moses Kamugisha said the idea of unions, even among essential service providers, was a good idea, because like all workers, essential service providers had the right to express their concerns. This was at the 8th CESCA biennial conference that took place at the Convention Centre at Ezulwini, Swaziland. Reported by Hlengiwe Ndlovu, 9 August 2007, the Swazi Observer, at <http://www.observer.org.sz/main.php?id=37089§ion=main>

Most African prisons seriously overcrowded: Most African prisons are marred by overcrowding to an extent that some are 200 - 300 percent full. Most delegates at the CESCA conference attributed the main cause of overcrowding to the slow justice system in place in most African countries. Many expressed concern over the high numbers of awaiting-trial prisoners. Delegates also expressed concern that overcrowding was leading to other problems such as the spread of diseases and lack of proper nutrition for prisoners. Reported by Fauster Claassen, 9 August 2007, the Swazi Observer, at <http://www.observer.org.sz/main.php?id=37091§ion=main>

Judge attributes prison overcrowding to awaiting-trial prisoners: Swaziland High Court Judge, Qinisile Mabuza, said that awaiting-trial prisoners cause congestion in correctional facilities because there are many and their trials take a long time. The judge added that this congestion impacts on the correctional aspect of the facilities, which is to deal with sentenced prisoners and their rehabilitation. She was speaking at the 8th CESCA biennial conference at the Convention Centre in Ezulwini in early August. She also stated that the awaiting-trial prisoners take up room in the correctional facility which should otherwise be used by sentenced prisoners. Reported by Fauster Claassen, 13 August 2007, the Swazi Observer, at <http://www.observer.org.sz/main.php?id=37204§ion=main>

Gabon

Ill-health caused by poor prison conditions prevented prisoner from attending court: The Director of a private newspaper in Libreville, the capital of Gabon, was handed a suspended prison term and a fine, but could not appear in court after he was hospitalised as the result of poor detention conditions. Guy-Christian Mavioga, Director of the private periodical L'Espoir, had been in prison over an editorial that was critical of President Bongo. He was under the watch of prison guards at Libreville's main hospital when a court sentenced him to one month in prison amongst other sentences. Mavioga was rushed from Libreville's central prison to the emergency room for treatment of respiratory problems and back pain?conditions he allegedly began to suffer during his incarceration. Reported by CPJ, 1 August 2007, at

<http://www.cpj.org/news/2007/africa/gabon01aug07na.html>

Congo Brazzaville

Prisons in poor conditions and prisoners mistreated: Congo's legal system came under fire for delaying trials and keeping remand prisoners in prison for long periods in poor conditions. Claude Ernest Ndalla, who was detained in Brazzaville in 1990 and is now a politician, criticised the prison conditions and raised concerns that young people become increasingly criminalised in prisons. The Director of Brazzaville's central prison, Colonel Sédar Oben, said that "Some are detained for six months, others for more than a year before they go to trial and most of them are detained for minor crimes." A prisoner, who did not want to be named, said most cellmates slept on the floor, on cardboard or thin mattresses in their small cells, leaving them exposed to diseases. Reported by UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 31 July, 2007 <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707310596.html>

President commuted prisoners' sentences to mark holiday: Congolese President, Denis Sassou Nguesso, commuted the sentences of 17 people on death row to life terms to mark the country's National Day. A presidential decree said that all death sentences had been commuted to life terms and that "Ten years have been taken off sentences ranging from 21 to 30 years." The decree also said that life sentences had been cut down to 30 years in prison and that "Sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years will be cut by half," reported by Sapa-AFP, 19 August 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=136&art_id=nw20070819203116734C440026

Democratic Republic of Congo

Prisoners escaped over starvation: More than 100 inmates escaped from the dilapidated central prison in Uvira, an area on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in South Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), after a demonstration over conditions, area administrator Eoloko Nsala said. Nsala said that the state could not afford to feed and take care of detainees. The escape took place on 1 August while guards tried to calm the rioting prisoners and return them to their cells. Reported by UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 6 August 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708060814.html>

Benin

Prison cells availed for genocide criminals: Benin made available to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) prison cells where persons convicted of crimes of genocide and sentenced to prison sentences by the ICTR could be held. Mr. Roland Amoussouga, spokesperson of the ICTR, said that the Registrar of the ICTR, Adama Dieng, visited a brand new detention centre in Benin in which a section has been reserved for the ICTR. Benin is one of six countries which have signed an agreement with the ICTR in order to receive in their prisons persons sentenced to prison terms. The other countries on the list are Mali, Swaziland, France, Sweden and Italy. Reported by Hirondeella News Agency, 4 August 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708061178.html>

Botswana

Prisoners should enjoy limited rights: The Assistant Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Gaotlhaetse Matlhabaphiri told Parliament that there will be limitations in the enjoyment of certain freedoms for prisoners. While answering a question from the Member of Parliament for Lobatse, Nehemiah Modubule, who had asked why members of Parliament are not allowed to address prisoners, Matlhabaphiri said that "It is for this reason that the Prisons Act CAP 21:03 specifies people who are allowed to visit prisons as official visitors, and these are judges, magistrates and such other person, as may be appointed by the minister under Sections 131." Reported by Mmegi/The Reporter, 3 August 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708061389.html>

Libya

Medics tortured in prisons: President's son revealed: Mr. Saif al-Islam, a son of Libyan leader, Col. Moammar Gaddafi, said that foreign medics freed from a Libyan jail were tortured into confessing that they deliberately infected

hundreds of Libyan children with HIV. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Mr. Saif al-Islam said: "Yes, they were tortured by electricity and they were threatened that their family members would be targeted. But a lot of what the Palestinian doctor has claimed are merely lies." Reported by Al Jazeera, 9 August 2007, at

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/71C92F03-1444-49C4-AB9E-70D195B6A659.htm?FRAMELESS=true&NRNODEGUID=%7b71C92F03-1444-49C4-AB9E-70D195B6A659%7d>

Bulgarian nurses allege torture in Libyan prisons: Bulgarian nurses gave testimony against Libyan jailers who the medics said had tortured them to confess that they deliberately infected hundreds of Libyan children with HIV. Bulgarian prosecutors in January launched an investigation against 11 Libyan officers who they believe had tortured five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor and plan to take them to a Bulgarian court if enough evidence is collected. Reported by Sofia, 10 August 2007, Mail & Guardian, at

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=316327&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__international_news/

Sudan

Medical appeal launched for Sudanese prisoners: Amnesty International launched an appeal for ailing prisoners who were secretly detained in Sudan with allegedly no access to medical aid. Members of the group include senior politicians and lawyers and at least one is over 70 years old. All but one of the prisoners are reported to be in isolation. Reported by Arjun Kohli, 14 August, VOA News, at

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-08-14-voa42.cfm>

Refugees in Israel kept in "prisons": After an unprecedented influx of asylum seekers illegally crossing the border from Egypt, the Israeli government in June ordered the establishment of a "refugee camp" for the new arrivals. Israeli Interior Security Minister, Avi Dichter, called the compound "accommodation prior to deportation" but this was disputed by the refugees' lawyer, Anat Ben Dor, who said "Let's call it by its name. These people are prisoners. If you're not free to walk out the door - you're a prisoner." The "camp" is located inside Ktsiyot prison, in the southern Negev desert. The prison holds some 2,500 Palestinians accused of security offences although prison officials are quick to note there is no contact between the two populations. Oded Saar, an Israel Prison Service (IPS) warden in charge of the refugees, opposed the prison terminology. Reported by Relief web, 14 August 2007, at

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/EMAE-763KEA?OpenDocument>

Nigeria

Prison hit by water scarcity: At least, 443 inmates of the Onitsha prisons in Anambra state were facing acute shortage of water supply as the borehole, sunk by the government in the prison yard, was no longer functional. The scarcity of water meant that prisoners were at risk of an epidemic. The Assistant Comptroller of the Prisons, Mr Columbus Omenuko, appealed for functional vehicles for the prison since the only one it has, is not sufficient to take the inmates to court. The General Overseer of the Grace of God Mission International, Pastor Nwachukwu decried that prisons did not reform criminals but rather hardened them. Reported by Odogwu Emeka Odogwu, 22 July 2007 at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707230934.html>

65% of all prisoners in Nigeria are awaiting-trial: According to Mr. Kayode Odeyemi, an Assistant Comptroller of Prisons, about 40,392 or 65 per cent of all prison inmates in Nigeria are persons awaiting trial. They are being held in over 30 prisons scattered across the country. Reacting to a question that Nigeria's prisons are considered the worst in the world, Odeyemi said his visit to prisons abroad had not proven that opinion right. Mr. Odeyemi said that the government was in the process of constructing new prisons to address the problem of overcrowding but he added that overcrowding was still a problem because the prison service had no control over the number of inmates sent to the prisons. Reported by Daily Champion, 27 July 2007, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707270116.html> see also

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73777>

Number of children in prison increasing: The Deputy Controller General of Ikoyi Prisons, Mr. Tope Kehinde, alerted the authorities to the plight of children languishing in Ikoyi Prisons. Kehinde raised the issue when the Chief Judge of Lagos State, Justice Adetula Alabi, and chairman of the Legal Aid Council, Olorogun Kenneth Gbogbi, visited Ikoyi Prisons. The Deputy Controller General, while welcoming the Chief Judge and his entourage, complained that

there were an increasing number of children being kept in prison following court orders by various judges and magistrates. Reported by Olumide Bajulaiye, 8 August 2007, Daily Trust, at http://dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1672&Itemid=2

Legal Aid Council helping prisoners: The Chairman of the Governing Council of the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria, Mr Kenneth Gbagi, said that his Council had helped the release of several prisoners from Ikoyi prisons. He added that they took cases to the Chief Justice of Nigeria asking him to compel all the 36 state chief judges to go to the prison and bring about an end to something they considered unacceptable. Reported by Charles Kumolu, 10 August 2007, Vanguard, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708100323.html>

Prison training school to be improved: In a bid to improve the welfare of prison staff, Governor Namadi Sambo promised to provide the Prison Training School, Kaduna, with an equipped library and school bus. He disclosed this when the Assistant Comptroller of Prisons and Commandant of Prison Training School Kaduna Babangida Mohammed, paid him a courtesy visit. Governor Sambo also pledged to help the school, established in 1915, in the rehabilitation of its dilapidated female toilet as well as provide the students with fertilizer for their practical farming. Reported by AbdulRaheem Aodu, 14 August 2007, Daily Trust, at http://dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1959&Itemid=2

Prison conditions appalling: Amnesty International researchers who visited Nigeria expressed shock at the prison conditions they witnessed and the protracted delays in Nigeria's justice system. The researchers said that "The circumstances under which the Nigerian government locks up its inmates are appalling. Many inmates are left for years awaiting trial in filthy overcrowded cells with children and adults often held together." The researchers added that "Some prisoners are called 'forgotten inmates' as they never go to court and nobody knows how much longer their detention will last, simply because their case files are lost." See press release by Amnesty International, 15 August 2007, at <http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGAFR440192007> also see <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708150367.html>

Inmates commended for not escaping when rains damaged prison: Inmates of a Plateau state prison were commended for not escaping after a wall in the prison collapsed during heavy rains. The Advisory Committee chairman of the Pankshin local government, Ignatius Datol, commended the inmates while inspecting the damage. He sympathised with the prison authority and the inmates over the unfortunate event. Reported by Rakiya A. Muhammad, 20 August, 2007, Daily Trust, at http://dailytrust.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2278&Itemid=2 or <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708201439.html>

The Gambia

Former prison chief in court over theft: The criminal trial involving David Colley, the former Director of Prisons continued at the Banjul Magistrates' Court, where one of the witnesses, Corporal Famara Sanneh, said that on 22 September 2004, he was instructed to go to the juvenile wing and collect a generator that was in a box, from Jainaba Touray and officer Sanneh, and took it to David Colley's compound in Yundum. Reported by Abdou Jeli Keita, 10 August 2007, Foroyaa Newspaper, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708130931.html>

Uganda

Prisons Services looking for funds to construct new prisons: The Uganda Prisons Service is seeking about Shs4 billion to buy land outside Kampala, the capital, to build a new spacious detention facility to de-congest the overcrowded Luzira Prison, located in Kampala. The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr Johnson Byabashaija, said that they had identified a 300-acre piece of land on Entebbe Road and are in negotiations with the owner. Dr. Byabashaija also said that the number of suspects in prisons is double the official capacity of Uganda's prisons, and he described this situation as 'sad'. Reported by Tabu Butagira, 20 August 2007, The Monitor, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708201568.html>

Malawi

Government to build four prisons: The Malawi government said it intends to build at least four new prisons in the country, including a maximum security prison in Lilongwe, as a way of improving conditions in the country's prisons. Vuwa Kaunda, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security made the revelation during a tour of Maula Prison in Lilongwe, saying the ministry is aware of problems inmates are facing due to congestion in the country's prisons. Mr. Kaunda said that "We intend to ease congestion by constructing new prisons and rehabilitating the already existing ones. Government will be constructing a new maximum security prison in Lilongwe and other prisons in the districts that have no prisons." Reported by Xinhua, 26 August 2007, Nyasa Times at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/index.php?news=1253>

Zimbabwe

Man still in remand prison seven years after conviction: A murder convict was still languishing in remand prison waiting to be sentenced seven years after his conviction. Collen Nhutsve was among 10 inmates who had stayed in remand prison for up to nine years without being tried or sentenced discovered by Judge President Rita Makarau during a tour of Harare Central Prison in October 2006. Reported by Fidelis Munyoro, 13 August 2007, the Herald, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708130658.html>

Prisoner forms band in prison: Mbuya Madhve, 56-year-old a prisoner, who is serving a three-year jail term for swindling a Harare businesswoman of Z\$200 million, teamed up with five inmates at Chikurubi Maximum Prison to form Guruve Stars, which now provides entertainment at Zimbabwe Prison Service functions. Reported by Patience Nyangove, 18 August 2007, the Herald, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708200341.html>

Liberia

Prisoners train in agricultural skills: Several prisoners completed a sustainable agriculture training program at the Monrovia Central Prison. Speaking at the close of the program at the Central Prison, the Assistant Justice Minister for Rehabilitation, Mrs. Fatumata Sheriff, appealed to donors and other international partners for support to make the program more effective and sustainable for the inmates. She said the exercise is part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Corrections' effort at the Justice Ministry aimed at empowering inmates before they are released from prison. Reported by Sallu Swaray, 8 August 2007, The Analysts, at http://www.analystliberia.com/agric_training_for_inmates_aug07_07.html see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708080550.html>

President visits prisons: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf toured a number of facilities in Monrovia, including the Monrovia Central Prison and the Post Stockade Prison, where she was detained more than 27 years ago following the 1980 military coup. The Liberian leader visited inmates at the Monrovia Central Prison and toured a cell in which she was held following the 1985 attempted coup. Accompanied by the Ministers of Justice and Defence, the President inquired from the inmates reasons for their detention and promised that solutions would be found to expedite their respective cases. The Justice Ministry and the President assured the female inmates their cases will be expedited. Press release by the Office of the President 11 August 2007, at http://www.emansion.gov.lr/press.php?news_id=349 see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708130229.html>

Ghana

Ghanaians detained in Egyptian prisons: Many Ghanaians are allegedly languishing in Egyptian jails, even after serving their sentences. One such person is 47-year old Stanley Elikem who finished serving a twenty-year prison term but is still being kept in a prison called Kanater Men's Prison in Cairo. A Ghanaian ex-convict who served in the same prison as Elikem, said that more than three Ghanaians have died in that prison in the last three years due to lack of proper medication. Reported by Selorm Amevor and Benedicta Bentum, 6 August 2007, Public Agenda, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708061207.html>

Kenya

Drugs smuggled into Kenya's prisons: Following an incident in which prisoners who had used drugs killed another inmate, two prison officers have a case against them pending in court. They are accused of bringing narcotics into the prison for sale to the inmates. Acting on intelligence reports, the officers netted their colleagues on different occasions as they tried to smuggle bhang into the cells stuffed in their coat pockets. Two other officers were interdicted after bhang and tobacco were found inside accommodation blocks used by inmates. The officers were suspended pending investigations in connection with the drug haul. Surveillance has also been stepped up inside the cells and all the inmates are being monitored closely. Reported by Macharia Mwangi, 4 August 2007, The Nation, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708060119.html>

Sierra Leone

Bar Association to offer prisoners legal representation: The Secretary General of the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA) Mr. Mustapha S. Turay, said that the prisons in Sierra Leone are overcrowded and the Bar Association of Sierra Leone has thought it fit to set up a human rights committee that provides legal representation for prisoners who cannot otherwise afford the service of solicitors. He said by so doing, the SLBA has succeeded in giving a human face to the once discredited Association, as formerly people saw it only as a money-making institution. Reported by Vidal Boltman, http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20056254.shtml

Somaliland

Political leaders to be released: President Dahir Rayale Kahin of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland agreed to release three leaders of the Qaran organisation who were imprisoned for setting up a political party unsanctioned by the authorities. The decision was made after an all-day meeting with a mediation team of religious leaders, human rights activists and local politicians. Reported by UN Integrated Regional Networks, 22 August 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708220526.html>

Egypt

Torture allegedly rampant in prisons: According to a report released by the Egyptian Organisation of Human Rights, the abuse and torture of Egyptians by security forces has allegedly become increasingly common. EOHR's report, "Torture in Egypt: a Crime without Punishment," stated: "Torture in Egypt has become a widespread phenomenon inside police stations and state security detention centres, as well as in prisons with the aim of forcing confessions from suspects." Reported by Al Jazeera, 10 August 2007, at <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C09DEB71-263E-46AC-A156-DF98F02531AB.htm?FRAMELESS=true&NRNODEGUID=%7bc09DEB71-263E-46AC-A156-DF98F02531AB%7d>

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