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Prisoners' rights activists protest over awaiting-trial prisoners: About 20 members of the South African Prisoners Organisation for Human Rights (Saphor) protested outside the offices of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development in Pretoria over the plight of awaiting-trial prisoners. Saphor spokesperson, Mr. Golden Miles Bhudu said that 'the protesters were trying to create public awareness about awaiting-trial prisoners languishing in prison without knowing when their cases would be heard.' Reported by Sapa, Cape Argus, 29 June 2007 at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3909067> see also http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=312708&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/ see also <http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=505149>

Thousands awaiting-trial in South Africa: Close to 50,000 suspects are awaiting-trial in South Africa's overcrowded prisons. Some of these inmates are innocent and after many years in prison the prosecution withdraws charges against them when they have already lost their jobs, marriages and property. Many awaiting-trial inmates are poor and some are foreign nationals. Many inmates also get assaulted while in prison. Some legal experts such as the Johannesburg based human rights lawyer Tobile Nene, said that 'long detention without trial is criminal, reprehensible and unconstitutional' which has no place in the new democracy. Reported by AFP, 12 July 2007 at <http://www.africasia.com/services/news/newsitem.php?area=africa&item=070712043914.dqhsq39l.php>

Awaiting-trial prisoners fluctuate according to season: Mr. Gideon Morris, Director of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons said that the number of awaiting-trial prisoners fluctuate according to the season of the year. He said that 'high season peaked in February, March and April due to large numbers of arrests in December and January.' That in winter, numbers slowly go back to 'normal.' He said that prison authorities find it difficult to manage an additional 8000 prisoners. This has contributed to prisoners awaiting-trial for long periods. 'The South African Prisoner's Organisation for Human Rights said there were close to 50 000 awaiting-trial prisoners out of a total 162 587 inmates in 240 prisons in

the country.' In the same report, a part-time soldier who was recently detained at Pollsmoor and now out on bail, alleged that the conditions under which prisoners are living at Pollsmoor prison are appalling. Reported by Helen Bamford, 28 July 2007, IOL at

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070728113739317C988515

Prisoners' rights

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Deaths at Waterval Prison: A report by the former Inspecting Judge of Prisons, Nathan Erasmus, implicated prison warders at Waterval Prison for the deaths of six prisoners since December 2006 at that prison. The report that was handed over to the Department of Correctional Services indicated that warders had assaulted the inmates which could have led to their deaths. The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, who was in possession of a copy of the report said that the report reflected very negatively on the Department and that he would call upon the Department to table it before Parliament. In a related incident, IFP National Chairperson, Zanele Magwaza- Msibi, who was inspecting prisons in KwaZulu-Natal was denied entry into Durban Westville Prison for three hours until the inmates demanded the authorities to grant her entry. Reported by Mhlaba Memela, 4 July 2007, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=508054>

Prison warders being investigated over the death of prisoners: KwaZulu-Natal police said that they were investigating warders implicated in the death of six prisoners at the Waterval Prison, outside Newcastle. The investigation follows a high level probe launched by the former Inspecting Judge, Judge Nathan Erasmus and Mr. Dennis Bloem, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services. The police said that investigations were progressing well and they were considering laying criminal charges against the warders. Reported by Mhlaba Memela, 6 July 2007, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=509907> see also

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=509904>

Same-sex inmates want to get married: The Department of Correctional Services said that many inmates in same sex relationships wanted to get married. Many inmates have applied to the Department for permission to get married. Such marriages have to be sanctioned by the National Commissioner and the Minister. A Constitutional expert, Professor Marinus Wiechers, argued that the Department cannot deny inmates their right to marry and found a family and that if the Department denied them that right, they would petition the courts to order the Department to allow them to get married. Professor Wiechers cautioned however that such marriages will raise some practical questions, such as whether the Department will allow the married couples to be detained in the same cell should they wish to do so. Reported by Sonja Carstens, 9 July 2007, IOL, at http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2143962,00.html see also

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070709115800113C856844

Accused better-off in prison than at home: The state prosecutor told court that Najwa Petersen, the woman accused of murdering her husband, was better-off in prison than at home because prison authorities would be able to monitor her closely and thus prevent her from committing suicide. The prosecution said that at home she was more likely to commit suicide because family members could not force her to take her medication. The prosecution said that at Pollsmoor prison there were 15 mentally ill inmates and that the prison authorities were taking good care of them and that Petersen would benefit from that arrangement. Reported by Sapa, 12 July 2007, The Mercury, at

<http://www.themercury.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3929063> see also

http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,152428,00.html

Multi-drug resistant TB reported in Western-Cape Prisons: Four cases of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) have been reported in Western Cape prisons. According to Dr Meyer from the Medical Research Council overcrowded prison conditions, poor ventilation and inadequate health care services create a favourable environment for the spread of infectious diseases such as TB. An earlier outbreak of the XDR-TB in Tugela Ferry (KZN) resulted in the deaths of 52 out of 53 infected persons. Lukas Muntingh from CSPRI commented that prisoners often do not get the one hour of outside exercise per day, which contributed further to the effect of overcrowding and poor health conditions. Reported by Diana-Marié Strydom, 23 July 2007, Die Burger, at

<http://www.dieburger.com/Stories/News/14.0.2866281712.aspx>

Democratic Alliance vowed to probe the cause of prisoner's death: The Democratic Alliance prisons

spokesperson, Mr. James Selfe, vowed to investigate further the death of an inmate at Modderbee Prison from unknown causes. In reply to a parliamentary question, Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, acknowledged that Schalk Willem O'Callaghan died in mid-May this year while awaiting trial but that the cause of death was unknown and that autopsy results had not yet been received. Mr. Balfour said that prior to the death, Mr. O'Callaghan did not have any history of previous medical ailments as there was no departmental health file opened for him. Selfe said that his understanding was that O'Callaghan was given the wrong medication by someone at the prison and that both the death certificate and the hospital had recorded his death as being from an overdose. Reported by Wyndham Hartley, 26 July 2007, Business Day, at <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/national.aspx?ID=BD4A524655>

Correctional Services National Commissioner to visit Pollsmoor: The National Correctional Services Commissioner, Mr. Vernie Peterson, was to visit Pollsmoor prison in mid-July to establish how the Department of Correctional Services was meeting its undertaking to improve the health services at Pollsmoor prison. The visit follows allegations that expired medicines were administered to prisoners, non-adherence by the medical personnel to the policies relating to medical administration, and that the health services were understaffed.
http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,152647,00.html

Escapes

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'Very dangerous' prisoners escape en route to prison: Mthatha police said that two very dangerous prisoners escaped from a police van which was transporting them from Tsolo police station to Wellington prison. The prisoners escaped when the van stopped at a traffic light. Police are investigating whether the prisoners bribed the police officers who were on guard for their escape or the officers were just negligent before they took any appropriate action. The office of the Safety and Security Department of the Eastern Cape Province expressed its dismay over the incident. Reported by Vuyolwethu Sangotsha, 6 July 2007 Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=509848>

C-Max prisoner escape case postponed: The case of Annanias Mathe, the Mozambican national accused of escaping from Pretoria's C-Max prison late last year was postponed to October 5 so that the prosecution could consolidate all the charges against him. Reported by Sapa, 17 July 2007, Cape Times at <http://www.capetimes.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3937119>

Governance and corruption

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Prison warder allegedly forces inmate to carry drugs: An inmate at Estcourt Prison in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, Mr. Dan Sithole, accused a senior prison warder of forcing him to deliver drugs (dagga) to another inmate. Mr. Sithole alleged that the prisoner warder 'set him up' by forcing him to deliver dagga to another inmate which was a prison offence for which he had to be detained in prison again despite his having been given a parole date by the parole board. He said that the reason for his alleged victimisation was that during his prison sentence he had reported to the relevant authorities that some prison warders were having sex in the presence of inmates and that warders kept a grudge over that. Reported by Canaan Mdlletsh 4 July 2007, Sowetan at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=508053>

Prison officials found guilty of misconduct: Several Correctional Services officials in the Eastern Cape were found guilty of fraud, corruption and negligence. The Department of Correctional Services launched 'Operation Vala' which found a prison warder drunk on duty, and warders' shoes in offenders' cells. They also found television sets, radios, DVD players, and pornographic material in prison cells. A nurse in charge of prison health facilities was facing charges of negligence for entrusting the safe keys to the health and medical supplies to a prisoner while she did not report for duty. Reported by Luyanda Makapela, 6 July 2007, Dispatch at <http://www.dispatch.co.za/2007/07/06/Easterncape/duct.html>

Smuggling of illegal items allegedly rife at St. Alban's prison: Despite the introduction of detectors and other devices to screen prisoners and visitors who enter St. Alban's prison in Port Elizabeth, illegal items such as knives, drugs and cell phones are still being smuggled into the prison. The Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Correctional Services Mr. Dennis Bloem was told that prisoners bribe warders to smuggle forbidden items into the prison. Mr. Bloem

recommended that employees of the Department of Correctional Services should be screened before they enter the prison premises and that their bank accounts should also be regularly checked to ensure that they do not engage in illegal activities. Reported by Tabela Timse 9 July 2007, The Herald, at http://www.theherald.co.za/herald/news/n08_09072007.htm

ANC Deputy President visits friend in prison: The African National Congress Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, visited his friend, Schabir Shaik, who is serving a prison sentence of 15 years after being convicted of fraud and corruption. The meeting between Zuma and Shaik lasted more than 30 minutes and no prison warder was allowed to be present. Reported by Canaan Mdletshe, 9 July 2007, Sowetan, at <http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=511517>

Prisoner claims to have murdered senior Free State official: A 39 -year old prisoner serving a 27 year prison sentence for murder, claimed that he was 'smuggled' out of prison on the pretext that he was going to hospital but was contracted to murder Noby Ngombane, a senior Free State official. The prisoner claimed that while he was serving his prison sentence at Barberton prison he was secretly released and driven through the night to be introduced to the widow of the deceased who promised him R120, 000 for the murder which he committed on the night of 22 March 2007, but he never received his money. The State withdrew the charges it had laid against the widow of the deceased and some of her relatives, but the prisoner wants the case to go back to court to be heard again. Reported by Sapa, 18 July 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070718161346426C298330

Prosecution not to investigate prisoner's murder claim: The Free State prosecution authority will not investigate allegations by a prisoner who is serving 27 years in prison for allegedly being contracted to murder a senior official in the Office of the Free State Premier. Noby Ngombane was murdered at his home on 22 March 2005 and the prisoner alleged that he was smuggled from prison on the pretext that he had been sick and was taken to the home of Ngombane where he shot him dead. Free State prosecution said that if the prisoner's claims do not contain any new evidence, no investigations will be carried out. Reported by Baldwin Ndaba, 19 July 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070719054926403C403365

Prisoner wanted to bribe police officer: Seveno Hendricks, a prisoner serving a 12-year prison sentence allegedly wanted to give R100, 000 to Mr. Kholiswa Faku who was the then Humewood station commissioner, who used to help him leave prison to go on his private business. Between 2004 and 2005 Mr. Faku allegedly coordinated the release of Hendricks from St. Alban's prison on several occasions. He was released on the pretext that he was required to assist the police with an investigation, yet Faku allegedly wanted to give Hendricks an opportunity to conduct his private business. Mr. Faku is being charged with having a generally corrupt relationship with Hendricks. Reported by Nomahlubi Sonjica, 24 July 2007, The Herald, at http://www.theherald.co.za/herald/news/n10_24072007.htm

Parole and sentence administration

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Minister of Correctional Services discloses Yengeni's parole conditions: Four months after two opposition party Members of Parliament asked the Minister of Correctional Services, Mr. Ngconde Balfour, to release the parole conditions of the former ANC Chief Whip, Tony Yengeni, the Minister disclosed them. Mr. Yengeni will be under correctional supervision until 23 September 2008 and also has to complete 16 hours of community service every month. He can only leave the City of Cape Town magisterial district with the express permission from the head of the community corrections. Mr. Yengeni is, amongst other conditions, prohibited from misusing alcohol or abusing drugs. Reported by Staff reporter, 30 June 2007, IOL at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20070630092011440C632920

Regional courts could impose life sentences: By end 2007 regional courts could have jurisdiction to impose life sentences under the minimum sentence legislation. This will supposedly reduce the backlog at the High Court level. However, cases of domestic violence are not specifically listed in the Schedules to the Criminal Law Amendment Act and therefore do not attract minimum sentences despite the high incidence and often serious nature of domestic violence in South Africa. Reported by Sabc news, 8 July 2007, Sabcnews, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,152181,00.html

Call for tighter parole for prisoners who commit crimes against children: The Chairperson of the Portfolio

Committee on Correctional Services, Mr. Dennis Bloem, called for tighter parole conditions for prisoners who commit crimes against children. Mr. Bloem was reacting to an incident where a 40-year old prisoner on bail for raping a five-year-old girl was arrested on suspicion of raping a 13 year old girl. Reported by Sabcnews, 11 July 2007, Sabcnews, at http://www.sabcnews.co.za/south_africa/crime1justice/0,2172,152370,00.html

A prisoner who was denied parole sought court's intervention: Mr. Ben du Toit, who is serving 28 years at Pretoria Central Prison for murdering his wife, petitioned the High Court to set aside the decision of the parole board denying him parole. Du Toit argued that with special remissions, he was entitled to be released on parole after serving nine years and eight months of his sentence. The parole board at Pretoria Central Prison denied him parole on the grounds that he needed to undergo further anger and stress management programmes to address his denial. The parole board ordered him to apply for parole again after 18 months but the High Court ordered the parole board to consider his case again after six months. Reported by Sapa, 14 July 2007, Mail and Guardian at http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=313934&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/

Prisoners threaten to take President to court if denied pardon: Lawyers representing Janusz Walus and Clive Derby-Lewis who are serving life sentences for the murder of Chris Hani threatened to take President Thabo Mbeki to court if he failed to grant their clients a presidential pardon. The lawyers said that as many 33 political prisoners have been granted presidential pardons and that their clients also qualified for pardon after serving their sentences since 1993. The South African Communist Party, which Chris Hani was heading when killed, promised to oppose the application for the presidential pardon. Reported by Daily News Reporters and Sapa, 23 July 2007, Daily News, at <http://www.dailynews.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3947505> see also http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2151840,00.html

'President Mbeki will not pardon Chris Hani murderers': Highly placed sources in the presidency allegedly said that President Mbeki will not pardon the killers of Chris Hani. It was reported that the presidency had taken a dim view of the ultimatum (of 30 days) given to Mbeki by the convicted murderers within which he was supposed to communicate his decision on the pardon to the prisoners, failure of which they would then take court action to compel him make a decision. Reported by News24, 24 July 2007 at http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/News/0,,2-7-1442_2152470,00.html

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Judge Ntlupheko Yekiso appointed acting Inspecting Judge of Prisons: Correctional Services Minister, Ngconde Balfour, appointed Judge Ntlupheko Yekiso as the new acting Inspecting Judge of Prisons. His appointment will be for three months and took immediate effect. He replaced Judge Nathan Erasmus. Reported by Sapa, 2 July 2007, Cape Argus, at <http://www.capeargus.co.za/index.php?fArticleId=3913078> see also <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707020979.html>

Suspected robber found in prison: A man suspected of committing armed robbery in 1998 at Bryanston was found in prison serving another sentence of robbery. Paison Nkosi Edison was traced by the police and found in the Johannesburg prison after serving six years of his sentence. The police asked the prison authorities to hand him over to stand trial for the alleged robbery that he committed in 1998. Reported by Sapa, 13 July 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070713132041718C376020

Man arrested for smuggling substance into prison appeared before Court: An 80 -year old Mozambican national, Zaphanias Mathe, who was caught attempting to smuggle an unknown substance into Pretoria C-Max prison for his son, well known C-Max escapee Annanias Mathe, appeared before court and his case was postponed to 30 July 2007. The defence argued that the substance that Zaphanias Mathe attempted to smuggle into prison was not illegal and therefore not forbidden under the Correctional Services Act. Reported by Sapa, 19 July 2007, IOL, at http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=nw20070719124024212C395650

Prosecution withdraws charges against man accused of smuggling substances into prison: The 80-year old Mozambican, Zaphanias Mathe, who was being charged with smuggling an unknown substance into C-Max Prison for his son, was released from prison when the prosecution withdrew the charges against him. The prosecution said that the reason for the withdrawal of the charges was that a toxicology report found that the substance that Mr. Mathe tried to smuggle inside the C-max Prison in Pretoria, contained nothing illegal. Reported by Sapa, 25 July 2007, Citizen at

<http://www.citizen.co.za/index/article.aspx?pDesc=44010,1,22>

Rehabilitation and reintegration

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Inmates being offered karate lessons: Inmates at Boksburg Correctional Services are benefiting from the experience of a well-known karateka, Shihan Peter 'Poison' Thage, who has volunteered to train them in various karate skills as one of the programmes to help in their rehabilitation. If things go according to plan, Thage wants to extend his martial arts skills programme to Heidelberg Correctional Services which accommodates female prisoners. Reported by Meshack Khotha, 9 July 2007, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=511486>

Welkom youth declared war on crime after visiting prison: After visiting Kroonstad Prison where 'they were exposed to the realities of prison life', Welkom youth signed a pledge never to involve themselves in crime and drugs. The visit to the prison was organised by the police and members of a community-based organisation 'Doing Right until Midnight'. The organisers of the visit said that 'the purpose of the trip was to educate the young people about life in prison and discourage them from taking drugs.' Reported by Simon Nare, 11 July 2007, Sowetan, at

<http://www.sowetan.co.za/article.aspx?ID=513092>

Other African countries

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Botswana

Prisoner challenged his death sentence: The Court of Appeal of Botswana reserved judgement in the case in which a death row inmate, Sepeni Thubisane, appealed against both his conviction and sentence. The issue on appeal was whether a confession upon which the inmate was convicted was properly admitted before the High Court. Reported by Alice Banda-Simon, 4 July 2007, Botswana Guardian at

<http://www.botswanaguardian.co.bw/3783765481094.html>

Prisoner unsuccessfully challenged corporal punishment: Bale Kebabshwaretse was sentenced to three years imprisonment plus four strokes with a cane for the offence of threatening to kill. Through his lawyer, he challenged the constitutionality of the punishment of caning on the grounds that it perpetuated discrimination because it can only be inflicted on male offenders. The court dismissed his application but held that corporal punishment could not be inflicted on him because he was above the age of 40 as the law provides that any person who is 40 years and older cannot be subjected to corporal punishment. Reported by Alice Banda-Simon, 4 July 2007, Botswana Guardian, at

<http://www.botswanaguardian.co.bw/37837655377.html>

Tanzania

Zanzibar inmates living in inhumane conditions: While debating the 2007/2008 budget, Zanzibar Members of Parliament said that the conditions under which prisoners are living on the island are inhumane and that the government should modernize its prisons. The Members of Parliament also said that prisons are overcrowded and that 'Prisoners are not happy at any time as they have to excrete or urinate in the shared buckets, and have no recreation, including being denied to watch TV or listen to radio.' Reported by Irinnews 5 July 2007 at

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73097>

Uganda

Prisons Council appointed: Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, the Minister of Internal Affairs inaugurated the Prison Council which was created by the 2006 Prisons Act. The Prisons Council, to be chaired by the Commissioner General of Prisons, will be responsible for recruiting and promoting prison officials, exercise disciplinary control over staff and advising the Prisons Authority. Reported by Charles Ariko, 28 June 2007, The New Vision at

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/573210>

Prisons ask for more pay and other benefits: The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabasaija, asked the government to increase the salaries of prison staff and also allow prison staff to benefit from the duty-free shops commonly known as the army shops. Dr. Byabasaija said that the prison warders are paid salaries that do not enable them to live decently. Reported by Andrew Bagala, 29 June 2007, The Monitor at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200706280912.html>

Female inmates rehabilitate themselves: Female inmates in Luzira prison, one of Uganda's oldest prisons, are reportedly participating in various activities which not only keep them busy on a daily basis, but also generate some income for them. These inmates have small projects, in which they participate as groups to manufacture handicrafts, participate in farming, and make handmade cotton blankets. Others participate in the Zero grazing project which has two cows and the milk they get from the cows is distributed to HIV positive female inmates and pregnant inmates. They also participate in religious activities and attend formal education classes. Reported by Patience Atuhaile, 7 July 2007, The Monitor at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707060858.html>

Prison fails to produce suspects to court: The prison authorities in Arua district, West Nile, failed to produce seven treason suspects to court for their bail hearing. The prison authorities said that it was unsafe to return the suspects because a storm had damaged part of the cubicles at the prison where the suspects would be detained before being produced to court. Reported by the New Vision, 7 July 2007, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707090797.html>

Inmates get access to computers: Inmates in Luzira Upper Prison, Uganda's Maximum Security prison, now have access to computers. These were donated by Uganda Telcom. The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabashaija, said that the five computers would be used strictly to boost the on-going computer programme improving prisoners' computer skills and use of the internet. Dr. Byabashaija said that the skills acquired by the inmates would benefit them after release from prison. Reported by Charles Ariko, 15 July 2007, The New Vision at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/576141>

Gulu to get new prison: The Gulu Resident District Commissioner, Mr. Walter Ochora, commissioned the construction of a 900 million shillings prison in Gulu town, northern Uganda. The prison would accommodate over 600 inmates and would address overcrowding, which has been a problem in the region for many years. The prison will serve seven neighbouring districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Lira, Apac, Oyam and Amolatar. The prison will also accommodate female inmates. The construction will take six months. The International Committee of the Red Cross is also involved in renovating some of the prisons in the region. Reported by Chris Ocwon, 22 July 2007, The New Vision at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/16/577330>

Soroti prison being renovated: The Soroti District Prisons commander, Mr. Jimmy Issamat, said that three wards for prisoners, an administration block and a sewerage line at Soroti Government prison, eastern Uganda, were being renovated. Mr. Issamat said that they had been operating under bad conditions because the offices had been leaking and the sewerage system had been over-flowing due to the old pipes. Reported by Felix Osujo, 22 July 2007, The New Vision at <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/17/577342>

Rwanda

Rwandans allegedly tortured in Ugandan prisons: The Rwandan-based newspaper, The New Times, alleged that some Rwandans had been arrested in Uganda and are being detained in secret prisons where they are being tortured. The paper alleged that the Ugandan authorities accused the arrested Rwandans of espionage and detained them in 'safe houses' in various parts of Kampala, the capital, where they subjected them to torture. The Rwandan Embassy in Kampala alleged that they had received appeals from Rwandans detained in Uganda but that the Ugandan authorities have frustrated their efforts to gain access to those secret prisons. Some civilian Rwandans are also allegedly being detained in military barracks in Uganda. Reported by Charles Kazooba, 3 July 2007, New Times, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707040568.html>

Rwanda abolishes the death penalty but prison conditions still poor: Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch welcomed the move by the Rwandan government to abolish the death penalty but cautioned that the prison conditions in that country were still appalling. Human Rights Watch pointed out that the number of inmates dying in prisons had increased. Amnesty International urged the government of Rwanda to ratify the Convention against Torture to prevent mistreatment in prisons. Reported by M& G, 27 July 2007, at

http://news.monstersandcritics.com/africa/news/article_1335581.php/Rights_gr

Ghana

Number of babies in Ghanaian prisons unknown: While participating in a roundtable discussion to commemorate the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Mr. Michael Cudjoe Ntummy, Chief Legal Officer of the Ghana Prisons Service, said that he was aware that there were babies living with their incarcerated mothers in various prisons in Ghana but that he did not know at what age the babies are supposed to be removed from their mothers. It also emerged during the discussions that the exact number of babies in prisons with their mothers in Ghana is unknown. Mr. Ntummy said that children will continue to be born in prisons as long as the courts continue sentencing women to prisons before pregnancy tests are carried out on such women. Reported by Frederick Asiamah, 29 June 2007, Public Agenda at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707021098.html>

Judiciary should adopt a sentencing policy to combat overcrowding: The Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee of Parliament, Mr. Ken Dzirasah, called on the Ghanaian judiciary to adopt a sentencing policy to combat the problem of overcrowding in the country's prisons. He said that the current situation where sentencing was done indiscriminately without consideration of the magnitude of the offence was responsible for the congestion of the country's prisons. Mr. Dzirasah said that when he visited Kpando Prison he saw 230 inmates but capacity only for 150, while the Ho Central prison had 396 prisoners but capacity for only of 170. The Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of Parliament, Mr. Yaw Baah, said that congestion at the prisons was a major concern to the Committee, adding that legislation on de-congestion at the prisons would help reduce the problem. The police were also cautioned to refrain from the habit of advising people who were below 18 years of age to misrepresent their age as being above 18 years in order to expedite the finalisation of their cases. Reported by Samuel Agbewode, 4 July 2007, The Chronicle, at

<http://www.ghanaian-chronicle.com/thestory.asp?id=2693>

British girls face prison term in Ghana: Two British girls, aged 16 years, were arrested in Ghana in possession of cocaine and if convicted would have to serve their sentences in Ghana as this country does not have a prisoner exchange agreement with the UK. UK authorities and the teenager's parents are concerned about the prison conditions in Ghana, which are considered to be basic and that the teenagers will have to rely on British High Commission in Ghana for their food and other basic needs. Reported by bbcnews, 13 July 2007, at

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/6897139.stm

Appeal for the release of unlawful detainees: Access to Justice, a Ghana-based non-governmental human rights organisation, appealed to the President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor, to order the immediate and unconditional release by the Prison Service of all persons being detained unlawfully in any prison in Ghana. The Chief Executive Officer of Access to Justice, Rev. Nana Adjei Ntow, said that the failure by the Prison Service to release unlawfully detained persons must automatically attract compensation for the victims of unlawful detentions against the Prison Service. Rev. Ntow said that he would be satisfied if the Chief Justice advised judges to award substantial compensation to victims of wrongful imprisonment when proven before a court. Rev. Ntow said that it is a basic human rights violation for people to be detained unlawfully and that such a practice was against the Constitution of Ghana. Rev. Ntow said that there were several remand prisoners for whom the only reason for their continuous incarceration was that the investigating officer had lost the file, were transferred, deceased or even retired from the Police Service. He added that judges were not even aware that some of the people they remand for a number of days to help police with the investigation, in fact stay in prison for years. Reported by Michael Boateng, 17 July 2007, Ghanaian Chronicle, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707170595.html>

Junior prison officers disgruntled: Several junior prison officials in Ghana were unhappy about the way old prison service vehicles were auctioned off and bought by senior prison officials. The junior prison officials alleged that the auctioning was carried out for the benefit of the senior officials and even junior officials who wanted to purchase the cars, were denied the opportunity because the senior officials said that they were entitled to the first option because they are required to travel for official purposes. Junior officials also complained that when the Prisons Department bought new cars for the senior officials, they thought that the old ones would be given to the junior officials but to their surprise they were auctioned off and some bought by the senior officials. Junior officials allegedly have to use their own vehicles to perform official duties. Reported by George Kyei Frimpong, 27 June 2007, Ghanaian Chronicle, at

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200706270709.html>

Angola

Minister concerned about young age of inmates: Angolan Home minister, Mr. Roberto Leal Monteiro, 'expressed concern about the average age group of inmates in the country's penitentiaries.' Mr. Monteiro observed that the

strengthening of the capacity and functionality of the police force in the fight against crime had resulted in the rise in the prison population and, which is more concerning, their average age of around 30 years, which corresponds to the active age for work.' The Minister said that his ministry had adopted a policy of restructuring and re-socialisation of inmates which helps in their reintegration and rehabilitation. Reported by Angola Press Agency, 22 June 2007 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200706250103.html>

Democratic Republic of Congo

Seminar focuses poor prison conditions: A five-day seminar on the reform of the Congolese prison system, involving the DRC Ministry of Justice, the European Union, France and United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) took place in Dr. Shaumba University in Kinshasa from 17 to 21 July 2007. The aim of the five day seminar, which also involved prison authorities from all over the DRC, was to find solutions to the problems facing the DRC prison system, where allegedly over 90% are in a poor state and overpopulated, with the majority constructed before independence. The DRC Justice Minister Georges Minsay Booka, while commenting on the importance of the seminar said that 'the Prison Service forms part of the mission of public security, and is an instrument in the fight against impunity and a foundation of the rule of law in the state. It is not a secret to anyone that the prison regime in this country is in a precarious state, with prison staff working in difficult conditions and the inmates living in sub-human conditions.' Reported by Eoin Young, 17 July 2007, United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707170968.html>

Prison as good as a 'mortuary': On their tour of Tshikapa prison from May 23 to May 26 2007, the interdisciplinary United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) allegedly witnessed appalling and inhuman conditions under which prisoners are detained. Detainees, whether convicted or accused, are condemned to death because they die of hunger. This is allegedly attributable to the fact that 'the Congolese state doesn't have a budget to feed its prisoners, with the exception of Makala prison in Kinshasa. For this reason, prisoners everywhere in the DRC depend on the good will of people to eat.' Because of lack of food, 'most prisoners in Tshikapa resemble skeletons. There are those that cannot manage to walk anymore, they must be carried.' In addition the prisoners allegedly 'spend the day in a room too small for their numbers, as they are not allowed walk in the prison courtyard for fear of escapees, because the wall is in a bad state of repair.' Reported by Veronika Hilber, 18 June 2007, United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200706181416.html>

Zimbabwe

Close to 8000 prisoners died in Zimbabwe prisons since January: Tapera Kapuyi, a human rights defender, alleged that 'about 7 800 prisoners have died in country prisons since January this year and the number is likely to triple by the year end.' It is alleged that the deaths are as a result of poor feeding, poor sanitation, lack of proper medication and torture. Gilbert Moyo, who was once imprisoned in one of the Zimbabwe prisons, alleged that 'the issue of deaths was not a surprise as tens of prison inmates die on daily basis.' Reported by Trust Matsilele, 5 July 2007, Zimbabwe Journalist at http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=2541

Journalist prefers Botswana prison to Zimbabwe: A Zimbabwe journalist who is seeking asylum in Botswana allegedly prefers to remain in a prison in Botswana than to go back to Zimbabwe. David Mpofo, who has been in detention since 2002 at Jerald Estate Prison would prefer to remain in that prison despite its poor living conditions than face death should he go back to Zimbabwe. He is allegedly being sought by the President Mugabe's government for publishing an article in a newspaper which alleged that the 2002 elections were rigged. Reported by Lance Guma, 6 July 2004, SW Radio Africa at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707060854.html>

Prison officer to do community service for theft: Ford Moyana, an officer at Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison, was ordered by a Magistrate to perform 630 hours of community service after pleading guilty to stealing property worth Z\$15,2 million from his employer. Mr. Moyana pleaded guilty to stealing from Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison, property which included a washing machine, electric motor, a pair of handcuffs and three coffee mugs. Mr. Moyana was arrested at Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison following a tip-off from a prisoner who had witnessed the incident. Reported by The Herald, 18 July 2007 at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707180349.html>

Inmate tells court he was raped in prison: While appearing before a Magistrate on the charge of rape, Edmore Kadzinga pleaded with the magistrate for bail saying that he risked being infected with HIV if sent back to the remand prison. Mr. Kadzinga 'broke down in court as he narrated how he had been sodomised by other inmates at Harare

Remand Prison.' The Magistrate denied him bail and called upon the prison authorities to investigate Mr. Kadzinga's allegations. Reported by Lindie Whiz, 20 July 2007, New Zimbabwe, at <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/crime5.16703.html>

Zambia

Government improves prisons conditions: The Zambian Government announced various measures to improve the conditions in prisons, which included the decongestion of prisons, the distribution of blankets and free provision of anti-retroviral therapy to HIV positive inmates. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707030690.html>

Malawi

President pardons 475 prisoners: The Malawian President, Bingu wa Muthalika, pardoned and announced the release of 475 inmates in commemoration of the country's 43rd Independence Anniversary.' Most of the pardoned prisoners had conducted themselves well while in prison and served at least half of their prison sentences, and others were of poor health and are thus released on humanitarian grounds. All the pardoned prisoners had been convicted of petty offences. Malawi prisons are allegedly overcrowded and prisoners are detained in very poor conditions. Reported by Charles Kufa, 8 July 2007, Nyasa Times at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/Breaking-News/1082.html>

President's pardoning of prisoner raises controversy: The Malawian President, Bingu wa Muthalika, sanctioned and approved the release of a prisoner convicted of murder on a presidential pardon, Chief Nyambi, and his action was criticised as being of a political nature and aimed at gathering support for the president. One human rights activist, John Mapila, said that the act was not done in good faith and that the early release of the chief was an insult to the family of the deceased. Villagers promised to kill the chief if he came to the village where his victim used to live. Reported by Ruby Suzgika, 24 July 2007, Nyasa Times, at <http://www.nyasatimes.com/National/1132.html>

Sudan

Sudanese refugees held in prisons in Israel: The Israel authorities said that the "hospitality facility" next to Ketziot Prison in the Negev desert that was constructed to house African refugees was not ready when hundreds of refugees, including children, arrived from Sudan in Israel and that they were being housed in the prison under conditions described as better than those of regular prisoners, said Avi Dichter, the Minister of Public Security. The refugees were not being subjected to prison discipline such as head counts and searches. The authorities were only detaining them in prison facilities pending their deportation. Reported by Jonathan Lis and Mijal Grinberg, 15 July 2007, Haaretza, at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/881739.html> see also http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/asection/la-fg-refugees12jul12,1,4101538.story?coll=la-news-a_section&ctrack=1&cset=true

Ethiopia

Opposition leaders pardoned: Thirty opposition leaders who were sentenced to life imprisonment in Ethiopia were pardoned by the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi. Mr. Zenawi also said that the released political prisoners will be able to enjoy their right to vote and be voted for but that the Members of Parliament who had been in prison and therefore missed parliamentary sessions for more than two years may lose their seats in Parliament. Reported by bbcnews, 20 July 2007 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6908039.stm>

Mauritius

UN Drugs Office held a workshop for Mauritius prisons: Representatives of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) went to Mauritius and held a series of workshops designed for the staff of the prisons department on the proliferation and prevention of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse in prisons. Recent figures by the Mauritius Statistical Bureau show that approximately 10% of the local prison population suffers from AIDS, mainly due to sharing of syringes. However, one prison official said that unless the government built more prisons, it will be impossible to put an end to the increase of AIDS in prisons. According to him, there is a lack of sufficient space to accommodate newly sentenced prisoners and this has resulted in newcomers being sexually abused in their cells by HIV positive prisoners. Reported by African Press Agency, 18 July 2007 at

http://www.afriquenligne.fr/news/daily_news/un_drugs_office_holds_sensitization_w%10shops_for_mauritius_prisons_200707183156/

The Gambia

Prison officials participate in human rights training: Gambian prison officials were among the law enforcement agencies that participated in a human rights workshop organised by the Bajito Onda Africa Foundation. According the Gambian Solicitor General and Legal Secretary, Dr. Henry Carrol, the objective of the workshop was 'to provide a platform in which security officers would be exposed to human rights issues, as well as to prepare them for positive involvement in human rights projects.' The Solicitor General added that 'in The Gambia, just like in several other African states, some law enforcement agents do not have foggiest idea about the provisions of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, constitutional human rights provisions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, amongst others' and that such a workshop on human rights was very important. Reported by A. Nyockeh and Augustine Kanjia, 4 July 2007, The Point Newspaper, at <http://www.thepoint.gm/National%20Stories1212.htm>

Tunisia

21 political prisoners released: Human Rights Watch welcomed the release of 21 prisoners by the Tunisian government. Among those released was a lawyer who was sentenced to prison for three-and-a-half-years for allegedly criticizing the government of Tunisia and the poor prison conditions in that country. Human Rights Watch has called for the release of more political prisoners in Tunisia. Reported by Kandy Ringer, 29 July 2007, bbsnews at <http://bbsnews.net/article.php/20070729155402714>

Morocco and Senegal

Moroccan and Senegalese children mistreated in Spain: Human Rights Watch released a report in which it alleged that 'Hundreds of unaccompanied migrant children from Africa held in government\$ facilities in the Canary Islands are at risk of violence and ill-treatment.' It is reported that children stay in these facilities in often overcrowded and poor conditions for indefinite periods. The children allegedly told Human Rights Watch that 'they have been subjected to beatings by staff and left unprotected from violence by their peers. They do not enjoy access to public education, they have limited opportunity for recreation and leisure, and they are unduly restricted in their freedom of movement.' Reported by Human Rights Watch, 26 July 2007 at <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/07/26/spain16449.htm>

Libya

Prisoners allegedly tortured: One of the prisoners who were detained in Libya and charged with allegedly intentionally transmitting HIV to hundreds of children when he was working as medical doctor at a Libyan hospital, said that he was subjected to various methods of torture. He alleged that he was given electric shocks, stripped naked and threatened with being killed. He alleged that he was also put in a cage with three dogs which bit him all over his body. He alleged that even the nurses were subjected to the same methods of torture, including being raped. Reported by Mail and Guardian, 30 July 2007, at <http://www.mg.co.za/articledirect.aspx?articleid=315301>

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