

Forum: General Assembly

Question of: Redesigning the prison system: more efficient, effective, and humane methods

Main Submitter: Denmark

Co-submitters: Norway, Portugal, Argentina, Morocco, Ukraine, Kenya, Malta

Co-Signatories: China, Andorra, Finland, Montenegro, Mali, Kenya, Norway, Croatia, Switzerland, Afghanistan, Canada, Sweden, Thailand, Argentina, Morocco, North Macedonia, Turkey, Czech Republic, Sri Lanka, Malta, Ukraine, WHO, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, Brazil, South Korea, Bulgaria, United States

Acknowledging that there is an excess of 11.5 million prisoners worldwide.

Concerned that an estimated 68% of released prisoners were rearrested within 3 years, 79% within 6 years, and 83% within 9 years of their release.

Conscious that 1 in 4 people in prison experience “serious physiological distress”.

Deeply disturbed that 74% of inmates reported not receiving any mental health care while incarcerated.

Emphasizing that mortality in prisons is rising, the number of deaths being 344 per 100,000 incarcerated people.

Regretting the knowledge that the leading cause of death in prisons is suicide.

1. *Calls for* Member States to implement regulatory laws which enforce humane inmate treatment, in order to eradicate the abusive, restrictive, and violent characteristics of the current prison systems:
 - a) Member states are encouraged to employ new legislation to increase transparency in prison systems:
 - i.) Publishing information about basic operations within the system and demographic information of both prisoners and staff can help identify policy problems and prevent abuses,
 - ii) Greater transparency of prison management should be enforced, in order to monitor staff treatment of inmates, and track resource distribution to minimize cases of corruption,

- iii) Oversight in forms such as audits, formal investigations, whistle blowing mechanisms, external monitoring, and inspections should be conducted, ensuring credible findings and aiming to prevent misconduct within the prison systems,
 - iv) A trained group of government officials can be in charge of reviewing prison information and completing inspections to ensure the prison's adherence to the law,
- b) Introduce adequate repercussions in case of refusal to follow up on these solutions, or in case institutions violate the basic rights of prisoners,
- c) All prisoners should be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings, retaining human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:
- i.) Discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, birth, or another status will not be tolerated and will be penalized accordingly,
 - ii) Staff members should undergo mandatory systematic training programs, which reinforce these fundamental principles, and encourage correct supervision within prisons;

2. *Strongly urges* to redefine prisons from being institutions of punishment to becoming institutions for rehabilitation, providing mental health support and counseling sessions to allow criminals to recover and become fully functional members of society:

- a) Prisons should include mandatory inmate psychology/counseling sessions, which will be concerned with inmate's behavior and mental health:
- i) Cognitive therapy can help prisoners change their mindset and allow professionals to aid them in recovery,
 - ii) Mental health issues should be treated by prescribing prisoners effective medication,
 - iii) One-to-one counseling will explore inmate's mental health concerns, self-inquiry, mindset issues, and emotional problems that may lead to re-engaging with criminal behaviors,
 - iv) Counseling will further protect inmates from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by providing a confidential space where they may express their concerns,
- b) Promoting prisoners to build interpersonal relations with their outside acquaintances which will serve to improve the inmates' mental health and social relations:
- i) Allowance for video calls, phone calls, and in-person visits to account for the isolation caused by prison establishments,
 - ii) In addition to regular meeting times, the occurrence of such meetings will depend on the inmates' behavior, promoting better discipline;

3. Encourages member states to administer education and vocational programs within prisons, further serving as rehabilitation techniques for inmates:

- a) Inmates who participate in educational programs are 43% less likely to commit a crime and return to incarceration within three years compared to those who do not:
 - i) The educational system would provide a choice for inmates, to determine the education they want to receive, allowing prisoners to gain new skills and knowledge they can utilize for their re-entry into society,
 - ii) Courses can include basic literacy programs, secondary school equivalency programs, and tertiary education,
- b) Vocational education should be obligatory in order to make sure inmates are not alienated from society at their release:
 - i) Such programs will focus on teaching inmates employment skills and increasing their individual autonomy, decreasing their reliance on governmental institutions,
 - ii) Inmates gaining skills that will help them reintegrate into society, will both contribute to the social and economic progression of the country;

4. Promotes access to recent/up-to-date information, to fulfill the rights of inmates to knowledge and aid in rehabilitation in the future, through:

- a) Encouraging the right of prisoners to closed forms of media such as but not limited to:
 - i) Making newspapers accessible,
 - ii) Providing access to radio stations,
- b) Requesting the improvement of prisoners' information literacy through regulated access to:
 - i) Computers,
 - ii) Television,
 - iii) Up-to-date newspapers;

5. Acknowledges the necessity for prisoners to maintain their right to adequate healthcare, along with suitable living conditions:

- a) Prisoners should be provided with a standardized level of quality and access to healthcare, sustaining their needs:
 - i) Inmates should have regular health checks, in order to maintain a high level of general well-being, as well as preserve their physical functions in order to efficiently reintegrate back into society,
 - ii) Adequate access to healthcare will reduce the frequency and the rate of transmission of diseases amongst prisoners,
- b) Inmates should be provided with safe nutrition, water, sanitation, dental services, accommodation, and other life-essential requirements,

c) Extending prison facilities or placing inmates in detention centers depending on the gravity of their crime to avoid overcrowding and meet safety and welfare requirements;

6. *Recognizes* that the prison discipline system works most effectively when inmates are treated in a humane non-antagonizing manner:

a) Communication with prisoners is crucial – prisoners can be consulted about how to reduce violence, for instance through regular meetings discussing causes of tension and through prison surveys about victimization, which provide knowledge about the underlying factors contributing to violence,

b) Guards should maintain a neutral position, not over-enforcing their authority, and evading resorting to violence. This will prevent inmates from antagonizing the staff and consequently will create a more comfortable environment:

i) Inmates should have the ability to denounce staff who violate basic human rights, therefore encouraging rational methods for resolving conflict, and eliminating factors that make prisons a hostile medium;

7. *Calls upon* governments to warrant women's safety in prisons and provide them with sanitary requirements needed:

a) Accommodate men and women on separate premises,

b) Buildings and boundaries separating male and female detainees should be sufficiently robust to prevent any access to the other side and should be regularly inspected,

c) Health care services that ensure safe procedures, respecting the dignity of the women they serve,

d) Necessary provision of free sanitary products, which should be made publicly available, followed by their appropriate disposal;

8. *Suggests* prisons to provide inmates with jobs to simulate life outside of prison and simultaneously contribute to society:

a) It is essential for prisoners to not dissociate from the reality of the outside life, and to maintain a routine, which will provide both physical and mental benefits:

i) It will establish their sense of purpose, therefore channeling their attention and reducing violent behaviors,

ii) Providing jobs will reduce the possibility of developing mental health disorders, eliminating the constant feeling of entrapment and establishing a more proactive environment,

iii) Maintaining a job will aid inmates in re-entering back into society, giving them a higher chance of finding an employer,

b) Prisoners would be able to take up jobs beneficial to the state and contribute both to the economy and societal development of the country;

9. *Resolves* to remain seized upon this matter.