

Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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Incarceration Nation

Here are some reminder statistics to document the enormous tragedy and injustice of the U.S. so-called "war on drugs" which is actually a war against low income and people of color.

Over the past 30 plus years, sentencing laws have been changed so that the U.S. currently imprisons 760 people out of every 100,000 people in the population. As a result, the U.S. has 5% of the world's population, but 25% of the world's prisoners.

In 1980, the U.S. prison population was about 150 imprisoned per 100,000 adults. Now, more than half of U.S. federal prisoners are there because of street drug related convictions. (The president is requesting a 4.2% increase to the Federal Bureau of Prisons operating budget for fiscal year 2013.) Of those arrested on street drug charges in 2009, 4 out of 5 were charged simply for possession.

By contrast, Japan has 63 people imprisoned per 100,000 in the population, Germany has 90, France has 96, South Korea has 97 and Britain has 153 people per 100,000 in the population imprisoned. In addition, Mexico has 208 and Brazil has 242.

PRISON RAPE

Just Detention International (JDI-- 3325 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 340, Los Angeles CA 90010), a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention, applauds a new report by the Department of Justice's Review Panel on Prison Rape. The report concludes the obvious: prisons and jails that are able to keep prisoners safer from sexual abuse have well-trained staff, committed leaders, and strong oversight. In other words, the will to do so. Which means that rape is not an inevitable consequence of incarceration after all.

Among the worst facilities mentioned are the Allred Unit in Texas and Orleans Parish Prison in New Orleans.

Cruel & Dehumanizing

A BBC radio program recently stated that there were at least 80,000 U.S. prisoners currently being held in solitary confinement. And that in Great Britain, there were five. What do they know that we don't?

A new report by Amnesty International, *Cruel isolation: Amnesty International's Concerns about Conditions in Arizona Maximum Security Prisons*, describes how over 2,000 prisoners are confined for months or years in conditions of extreme isolation and sensory deprivation.

More than one in 20 of the total prison population in Arizona is held in isolation--a disproportionately high ratio even in this country thought to house more prisoners in solitary than any other in the world. Over a dozen are children between the ages of 14 and 17.

Most of Arizona's isolation prisoners are held in the the Special Management Units (SMUs) at the Eyman state prison complex in the town of Florence.

Meanwhile, a number of states have recently reduced or closed down their isolation units following court orders or to cut costs. In 2007, Mississippi tightened its criteria for assigning prisoners to its isolation unit and began phased group recreation and communal activities, allowing prisoners to eventually move into general population facilities. The authorities admit that these changes led to significant improvements in prisoner behavior and a reduction in violence and the use of force.

Also, the governor of Illinois has proposed that the supermax solitary confinement prison in Tamms be closed. In 2010 a state court decision found that "Tamms imposes drastic limitations on human contact, so much as to inflict lasting psychological and emotional harm on inmates confined there for long periods."

Massachusetts prisoners, who were often held in solitary, were found to be committing suicide at three times the national average.

CRIME OF THE MONTH

Apparently, even sunlight threatens Israel's existence. Demolition orders have been issued for solar panels which provide electricity to several small villages in the West Bank near Hebron. The energy project established by Comet ME, an Israeli non-governmental organization funded by Germany, is an attempt to circumvent Israel's apartheid policies. While Jewish Settlements in the area, illegal under international law, are connected to national water and electric grids, Palestinian villages which have existed for generations are denied basic infrastructure. Efforts by Palestinians to provide their own services are repeatedly thwarted by Israel. Along with electricity generating facilities, rain water harvesting systems are also demolished. In fact, one form of entertainment engaged in by Israel soldiers is using Palestinian water-collection tanks for target practice. Because, you see, both the sun and the rain belong exclusively to Israel.

Israel's excuse for such destructive policies is that these projects are built without permits; everyone has to abide by planning ordinances, after all. Unfortunately, these ordinances deliberately exclude Palestinian development. Israel rarely grants building permits to Palestinians. Only 91 permits were issued for Palestinian construction in this area between 2001 and 2007. During that time, more than 10,000 illegal Jews-only housing units were built on Palestinian land and 1,663 Palestinian structures were demolished, leaving thousands of Palestinians homeless and without basic services. Israel's apartheid-based planning only allows for Jewish development.

Our Crime of the Month is Israel's continued use of racist colonial policies to deprive Palestinians of the basic necessities of life.

Se celebra Día del Niño

El Día del Niño es un evento que muchos países latinoamericanos celebran el 30 de abril; en Estados Unidos este homenaje a los pequeños se ha liderado por los Hispanos que viven de este lado de la frontera. El evento ya se ha enlazado con la literatura y en enfatizar su importancia en el desarrollo infantil. Se celebra con juegos, comida, rifas y muchos premios.

Voices from Inside

Vacaville CA

February 6, 2012

Around 2008 you published my note informing all that I had sued the CDCR for a Halal diet. I'm happy to report that we settled the lawsuit on April 1, 2010 and now all Muslims in CDCR are allowed to receive a Halal diet at the evening meal. I'm filing a new suit to get Halal meats for the morning and lunch meals....

Taylorsville NC

February 6, 2012

The convicts on hunger strikes out there [in California], tell them I am praying for each and everyone of them. You all are in my prayers, heart and thought....

Gatesville TX

February 8, 2012

April is Sexual Assault Awareness month. [Eds. note--Resource: JUST DETENTION INTERNATIONAL, 3325 Wilshire Blvd #340, Los Angeles CA 90010. Formerly *Stop Prison Rape*. Works to end sexual violence against men, women, and youth in all forms of detentions. Free quarterly newsletter and survivor packet.]

The Education from the Inside Out Coalition backs legislation to eliminate the 1994 ban on Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated persons and to re-establish the opportunity for otherwise eligible people in prison to obtain college aid through Pell Grants for post-secondary education programs.

Copies of the Newsletter will be included in all correspondence we send out. To receive the Newsletter monthly, send us self-addressed, stamped envelopes (with the CPR return address)--up to 12 at one time.

Please continue to send us address changes and renewal requests, in order to receive the yearly holiday card/new calendar.

Also, please note that the only address to use to be sure to reach us continues to be: PO Box 1911, Santa Fe NM 87504. And remember: NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons Project for making our Newsletter available on-line for free downloading and distribution. It is at: <http://www.realcostofprisonsproject.org/coalition.html>. This is a GREAT site!

We continue to depend on our readers' financial contributions to be able to go on with our work. Thank you so much for your ongoing support!