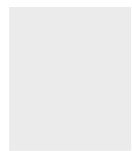


# 109

## ISSUE DESCRIPTION



COMMITTEE Human Rights Council  
ISSUE Improving Law Enforcement and Prison Conditions  
SUBMITTED BY Lilla Gergely, President of the Human Rights Council  
APPROVED BY Vilmos Eiben, President of the General Assembly

## Introduction

Criminal justice is an umbrella term referring to the concept of law, ensuring obedience to the law, and the adequate consequences of disobeying the law. This concept revolves around two core ideas that each individual has certain rights, even the suspects and the convicted criminals; and the prosecution and punishment to be carried out by the state following set laws.

The three main components of the criminal justice system are:

***The law enforcement***, which generally represents the first direct contact of people with the system, since it aims to maintain order in society by protecting the rights of citizens and ensuring obedience to the law at different levels, in the United States, at local, state and federal levels. At each level, its main focus is to prevent, investigate and respond to criminal activity.

***The court system***, which is designed to provide the individuals accused of having committed a crime with a fair trial which weighs all the evidence gathered and concludes the guilt or innocence of the defendant. According to the severity of their crime, they will be convicted and sent to correctional facilities.

***Correctional facilities***, like institutional correctional facilities, community correctional facilities and rehabilitation, which ensure the safety of society by separating the convicted individuals. In this department will the sentence of the criminal be carried out, who will be further provided with counselling, access to education and other support services as well as liaisons.

As the criminal justice system ensures societal safety, its proper functioning is essential. While the court system indirectly affects citizens, the law enforcement and correctional facilities engage more directly, emphasizing their outstanding significance. Despite this aspect, hardships are faced in both fields which are calling the Human Rights Council to take action.

## Definition of Key Terms

Law - A codified set of rules made by an authority aimed at regulating social behaviour. These sets of rules must be obeyed and in case of breaking the law, the offender must undergo the criminal procedure.

Authority - the individuals and institutions in the criminal justice system empowered to enforce laws

Crime - any offence, serious wrongdoing or sin which disobeys the law or the negligence of obligation

Incarceration - the procedure of imprisoning a criminal

Jurisdiction - the authority of official organisations to make decisions and judgements (like the court system)

Juvenile Detention - a specialized correctional facility for individuals below a particular age who have committed a crime

Institutional Correctional Facilities - jails, prisons and penitentiaries, having distinct levels of security and housing criminals according to the severity of their crimes

Community Correctional Facilities - They focus on aiding the incarcerated people in the transition back to society, as well as serving as a secondary jail for non-violent offenders or the ones shortly finishing their sentences.

Rehabilitation - the process of returning to a good way of living or the help provided during this process

Liaisons - the umbrella term for probation and parole officers who help the communication between the convicted and the criminal justice forces, usually with the court system

Parole - the permission for a prisoner to be released before finishing their sentence, usually for good behaviour in prison

Police Brutality - an extreme form of police misconduct, where police use excessive and unwarranted force against individuals

Civil Liberties - the freedom of acting, thinking and speaking unless it hurts others

Recidivism - the act of continuing to commit crimes even after having been punished

Solitary Confinement - the form of punishment, in which someone is kept in a room alone

Inmate Rights - the rights of the civilian and military prisoners against discrimination and abuse within correctional facilities

Penal Labour - a form of punishment which includes usually forced manual labouring

## General Overview

The individual sections of the criminal justice system have always been facing challenges throughout history, as well as they do nowadays, which set back their efficiency greatly. The hardships vary regionally, however, there are some common issues in law enforcement, like:

### RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

One of the most limiting factors is the recruitment and retention within departments, as they cause deprivation of human resources. In 2021, a survey by the Police Executive Research Forum was conducted, which reported an 18% increase in resignations and a 45% increase in retirement in comparison with the previous year. The survey unveiled the various underlying reasons for the great number of leaving, including, but not limited to the preference for jobs outside law enforcement, which generally rooted in the negative perception of law enforcement and in the pressure of the family, furthermore, since the survey was conducted in 2021, therefore the pandemic was a crucial factor as well.

Making up for these losses is another ordeal as further results of the survey of the International Association of Chiefs of Police revealed the great difficulty in recruiting eligible candidates or lacking applying candidates. All these factors are contributing to staffing difficulties which have further consequences like the reduction or elimination of services, the shrinking working

capacity and the slowed down working pace. All these make keeping up the pace with the broadened landscape of crimes and further newly emerging ones almost impossible.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND OFFICER SAFETY

The job of the ones employed in law enforcement involves dangerous and stressful situations in the line of duty, such as gun violence and other hidden, although hazardous factors may hinder the performance or cause the officer to leave law enforcement. There is an observable increase in the trend of police officers suffering from mental illnesses. These are greatly rooted in the stress and pressure they have to encounter every day, not to mention the potentially traumatic events they might experience. Although all these issues have great impacts on their jobs, affecting objective thinking, rapid decision-making, precision and further skills are reduced, thereby potentially endangering themselves and others. The „What Cops Want in 2024” survey revealed that 83% of officers are experiencing the impact of their mental health on their work, although the great majority of officers are reluctant to seek help. The experienced mental health issues include sleep disturbances, heightened anger, relationship and family issues, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, PTSD and in extreme cases even suicidal thoughts.

## THE CORRELATION OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND DECLINING MORALE OF THE OFFICERS

The Police and other criminal justice branches are still actively fighting against the negative perception. Since the cooperation between police and the community is often limited and full of tension, therefore the efficiency is greatly set back. This negative perception is greatly because of the declining morale of the officers resulting in acts like police brutality, police corruption, and vigilantism, as well as torture, abuse and killings. Despite in the United States the Constitution aiming to protect inmates from being physically and sexually assaulted, facilities nationwide are experiencing failure as prisoners are undergoing beating, stabbing and rape every day. Further alarming issues are raised by the growing corruption and abuse of power among correctional staff, who are not held accountable. Not only the brutality but the negligence of officers is concerning as well, as there have been critical questions raised about the incarceration of mentally ill criminals, as many believe that they would rather belong in hospitals where they could receive proper treatment.

## LIVING CONDITIONS AND OVERCROWDEDNESS

Prisons often do not achieve the most basic of standards when it comes to living conditions, causing inmates to further suffer, even though their primary punishment is to be deprived of liberty. The living conditions vary regionally, but prisons in over 124 countries are exceeding

their maximum capacity, causing higher rates of abuse and infections due to poorer sanitary conditions. Despite there being international standards and requirements regarding adequate accommodation, food, water, sanitation, healthcare, access to light, fresh air, opportunity to exercise, clothing, bedding, contact with the outside world and access to legal representation and also having specific standards regarding particular groups, such as women and children, many of the prisoners are not granted with these rights.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

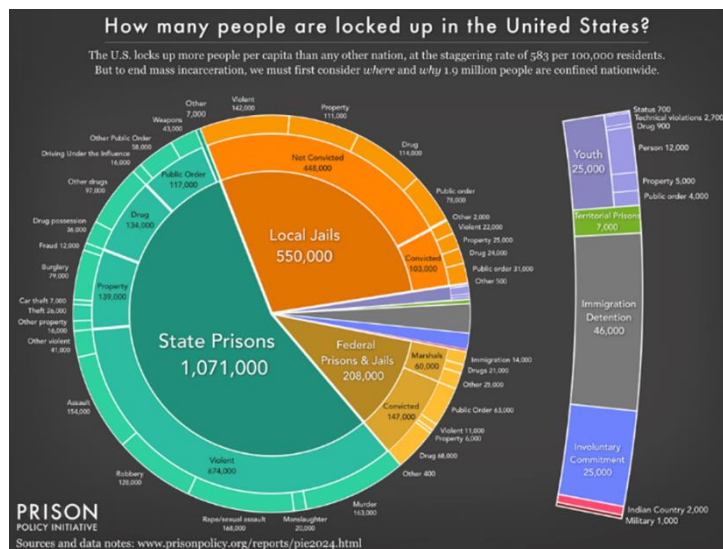
The history of criminal justice varies in every country, however, the first form of statutory police force in the world can be dedicated to the Kingdom of Scotland in the form of the High Constables of Edinburgh since 1611. The constables, who were mostly merchants and craftsmen, were responsible for ensuring general obedience to 16 regulations relating to curfews, weapons and theft. The first centrally organised and uniformed police force was founded by King Louis XIV in 1667 to safeguard the order in Paris, creating the office of "lieutenant general of police".

On the other hand, the foundation of prisons can be dated back to the rise of states. The Romans for example, were among the first ones to use the concept of prisons for punishment. These forms of housing included metal cages, basements of public buildings and quarries, as well as the infamous Mamertine Prison which was located within the sewer system of ancient Rome. The regulated prison system, however, was not yet created, imprisonment was intended to be rather a temporary measure prior to trial and execution. These prisons were filthy, had poor ventilation and were usually situated underground, not divided into separate rooms but had all the prisoners in one room chained to the walls, thereby causing psychological and physical torture to the inmates. The development and the general conditions in prisons vary from country to country, as well as the same can be said about law enforcement.

## Major Parties Involved

**United States of America:** The United States struggles to attract and retain qualified personnel, as the police is severely negatively perceived, due to the common police brutality, biased and violent policing and corruption. In 2024, more than 1,200 people were killed by the police and used force on at least 300,000 individuals. Officers are experiencing gun violence every day, therefore the number of mental health issues has increased, whereas the safety of officers has greatly decreased.

The United States has nowadays the largest number of incarcerated people, meaning nearly 2 million people. Great struggles with overcrowdedness and a great amount of abuse are experienced, and there have been complaints about living conditions and the quality of food served. Further ones expressed that they are not provided with treatment, education and rehabilitation.



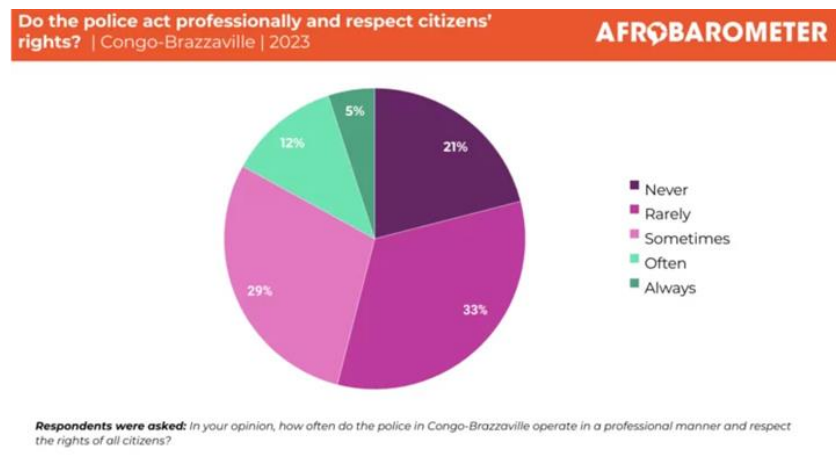
**Russian Federation:** There have been examples of police failing to answer calls, resulting in deaths, which is reported to be due to the critical shortage of officers, although the number of officers per 100,000 people is more than double the US or the UK. Recently there has been a massive drop in the police numbers as many due to poor wages and stress are opting for jobs with lower stress levels. However, the stress on the remaining officers increases, leading to corruption and police brutality.

In one of the most brutal penal colonies, the Siberian IK-6 prison is located 20 degrees below zero and provides the inmates with nothing more but a concrete cell with a fold-out cot, stool and sink, optionally with a small cabinet. Inmates, when not in the cells, are forced to hold their hands behind their backs, making the collection of the sheets from the corridors humiliating and nearly impossible. Sleep deprivation, malnourishment, medical neglect and the endless set of arbitrary rules are all techniques to break and control the inmates. The Russian penal system also emphasizes the importance of penal labour.

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** The law enforcement has always been focused on satisfying the state's aims regardless of human rights. Only a small minority of police focuses on operating professionally, respecting basic human rights, whereas the majority conducts

unlawful arrests, cruel and degrading treatment of detainees, frequent tortures and extra-judicial killings by the police.

Inmates described Makala prison as „not a prison but a detention centre resembling a concentration camp, where people are sent to die”. Makala generally has a capacity of 1,500 prisoners but holds around 10 times more, ranging from petty criminals to political prisoners and murderers. Further complaints included unsubstantial food and poor access to clean water as well as electricity blackouts causing the power fans to not work and resulting in unbearable heat in the cells.



**Venezuela:** Human rights are not respected in Venezuela either, since there have been credible reports about the violations of each basic human right including but not limited to arbitrary killings, inhumane and humiliating treatment, torture, sexual, physical and verbal abuse, deprivation of food, water, light and movement along with the others. All of these issues are rooted in general political corruption, chronic shortages of food and medicine, and high rates of unemployment, therefore crimes are flourishing.

The violence and the humanitarian crisis in the penitentiary system persist even after the Venezuelan authorities managed to take back control over prisons from the hands of gang leaders known as pranes.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The measures taken to solve the issues of law enforcement and correctional facilities vary in every country as each of them is experiencing different hardships and are provided with different



resources. However, 2 major organisations can be highlighted, as they are actively campaigning for change:

### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP)

Established in 1909, the NAACP is one of the oldest organisation advocating for more equal rights, calling for the abolishment of discrimination against African Americans in the US which is believed to be one of the groups targeted by police brutality and injustice. The NAACP seeks solutions to unresolved issues like racial discrimination and segregation, injustice in the criminal justice system due to racial prejudice, furthermore, aims to promote equal opportunity in education, employment, housing, and healthcare.

### EQUAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE (EJI)

Founded in 1989 by attorney Bryan Stevenson. The main goals of EJI include but are not limited to putting an end to mass incarceration and excessive punishment, as well as challenging racial injustice and systemic inequality while protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable, including the poor, incarcerated, and condemned.

## Possible Solutions and Approaches

The prevalence of the issue calls for discourse over the improvement of such correctional facilities and the conditions of the entirety of law enforcement. While previous attempts may have moved the case forward, statistics and research show that the problem persists and only a multifaceted approach may function as a tool to combat it.

Countries and governments are required to take action locally, however, it is crucial to uphold international regulations and collaboration. They should aim to function domestically, as well as globally, hence they might need to implement some of the following steps to eradicate the issue:

- ❖ regular mental health check-ups and provided counselling for police,
- ❖ international regulations regarding prison conditions,
- ❖ investigation of abuse of power and police brutality,
- ❖ increased wages for officers to prevent corruption,
- ❖ reduction of overcrowdedness by creating further correctional facilities,
- ❖ treating mentally ill prisoners in mental hospitals.

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(All accessed on the 12th of January 2025 between 12:00 and 20:00)

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