



## Prisons/Detention

Under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, Ireland must designate or establish an independent National Preventive Mechanism for the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Despite having signed OP-CAT on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007 and agreeing at UPR 1 to continue efforts to ratify OP-CAT, as of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016, Ireland has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol or even begun the formal process of establishing a National Preventive Mechanism.

In 2014, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern 'at the lack of progress in eliminating adverse conditions in a number of prisons' in Ireland, with regard to a number of issues including sanitation problems, overcrowding, and high levels of inter-prisoner violence.

### **Recommendations**

*Ratify OP-CAT and create an effective and independent National Preventive Mechanism to include a fully independent complaints mechanism, an Office of Prisoner Ombudsman and a strengthened Office of the Inspector of Prisons*

*Eliminate 22 and 23 hour lock up and bring prisons in line with international standards in respect of treatment, accommodation and regimes*

*Remove all children from adult prisons and ensure that the child detention school guarantees, at a minimum, protection of rights provided by international law*

*Provide open prison facilities for women*

*Increase the use of alternatives to detention and continue to legislate for additional effective alternatives to detention*

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While the new Cork prison has brought an end to slopping out in that prison, as of October 2015, 1,367 prisoners (37%) are still required to use the toilet in the presence of another prisoner and slopping out continues in Portlaoise and Limerick prisons.

As of October 2015, only 2,040 (55%) prisoners were accommodated in single cells and the number of prisoners on 22 and 23 hour lock up was 78, which represents an increase of 13 (20%) since July 2015.

According to the most recent Council of Europe Ant-Torture Committee (CPT) Report on Ireland (2015), inter-prisoner violence remains far too high and continues to be fuelled by the existence of feuding gangs and a high prevalence of illicit drug use. The Committee has strongly suggested that Irish authorities pursue efforts to address the phenomenon of inter-prisoner violence, including through strengthening the implementation of the drug strategy programme.

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## About Your Rights. Right Now

*Your Rights. Right Now* is a coalition of 17 Irish NGOs, trade unions and civil society groups established by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in 2010 to coordinate the civil society response to Ireland's first examination under the Universal Periodic Review. This group was re-convened in 2015 in advance of Ireland's second examination. The coalition conducted a number of general and thematic consultations and invited written submissions to inform its report which was submitted to the UN in September 2015.

Members of the coalition are:

- Age Action
- Educate Together
- Free Legal Advice Centres
- Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- Irish Family Planning Association
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Mercy Law Resource Centre
- NUI Galway, Centre for Disability Law and Policy
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland
- Union of Students in Ireland
- Disability Federation of Ireland

For more information see [www.rightsnow.ie](http://www.rightsnow.ie)



### Facts and Figures

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016, Cork and Limerick female prisons were reported to have been at 137% and 146% capacity respectively, with many others operating almost at full capacity.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016, 12 seventeen year olds were detained in Wheatfield Place of Detention, (an adult prison).