OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP
OF EXPERTS ON THE STANDARD MINIMUM RULES
FOR THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS
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RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
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¹ This document was received in the Arabic language and has been officially translated.
Some observations on best practices concerning the treatment of prisoners

Prisoners have the right to protection and to complete care inside prisons. They have the right to expect that the authorities will protect them from physical and sexual violence. This right extends beyond the right to request detention in protected isolation. By providing trained staff in sufficient numbers, prison authorities should be in a position to provide a safe environment to all prisoners without the need to resort to practices inconsistent with human rights. Nevertheless, the problem of violence in prisons is a proven fact in some countries.

Some of the best methods and practices concerning prisoners that fulfil the purpose of criminal punishment consist in rehabilitating and reforming prisoners.

These methods include social care through safeguarding the inmate’s ties with the outside community, communications, including visits and correspondence and his right to complain, health care, education, discipline, religion and work.

1- Visits

An inmate must be allowed to meet his visitors inside the prison, especially members of his family. These visits should be organized so as to specify their times and specific duration with a view to fulfil their purpose which is to prevent the inmate’s developing feelings of isolation and introversion.

2- Correspondence

All penalty systems acknowledge the prisoner’s right to correspondence. This right must, however, be limited by certain restrictions and subject to control within a certain number of letters. Subjecting these letters to control is a natural right of the prison administration in order to safeguard security and fulfil the purpose of criminal punishment.

3- Telephone communications

A prisoner has the right to make two telephone communications at most weekly for a duration not exceeding 20 minutes. As for incoming telephone communications, they are in principle not allowed, the exception being that they may be received in case of need as determined by the administration of the penal institution at its discretion.

4- The right to complain

A prisoner has the right to resort to the judicial authorities having competence over submitted complaints and to the prison director or his deputy. Complaints must be sent in a manner that ensures the safeguard of their confidentiality and the prompt elimination of their causes.

5- The right to meet with a lawyer

A prisoner has the right to meet with his lawyer in the course of any litigations in which he is a party. A translator may attend with the lawyer in the case of foreign prisoners. The prison administration will supervise the visit visually, but will not listen to what is said during such visit. Times and durations of visits for meetings with lawyers will be specified.

6- The right to appeal against judgments

The prison administration must allow a prisoner to undertake procedures to appeal against criminal judgments issued against him without their interfering in any way in these procedures. It should also inform the prisoner of what he must do to ensure the legal validity of the appeal and provide him with advice if he so wishes.
7- Medical treatment of prisoners and health care

Prisoners receive medical treatment according to the same methods used outside the prison. Treatment shall encompass all organic and psychological diseases and the treatment of drug addicts. Prisoners must periodically be subjected to medical examinations to ascertain that they are free from diseases at least once every three months.

8- Education

The importance of education in prison is due to the fact that it eliminates one of the factors contributing to criminality (namely ignorance) thus reducing the causes for recurrent criminality. This aspect is considered part of a disciplinary system, analphabetsism and ignorance being two factors contributing to criminality that education can no doubt eliminate.

The agencies entrusted with the prisoner’s education must take into account his preferences and the specialty he masters in order to fulfil the objective of education, namely reform and discipline, that is to say to leave the prisoners world and enter the law-abiding world and become a law-abiding normal person living in peace and security among his fellow citizens.

9- Rehabilitation

This is done by preparing the prisoner psychologically and physically to return to the community after his release as an active and constructive member in it and not the opposite, through the provision of specialized courses conducted by professionally and technically qualified persons over a time span that enables the prisoner to return to the community as an active member.