Concern Over Rate of HIV/AIDS in Mozambique Prisons

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More needs to be done to address HIV in Mozambique's prisons, where prevalence is twice that of the general population, said Justice Minister Benvinda Levy at the National Seminar on Prison Health in the capital city of Maputo, allAfrica.com reports. She spoke April 13 to spur governmental and nongovernmental institutions to become more involved in the health of the country's estimated 14,000 prisoners.

According to the article, a 2002 study conducted by Mozambique's health ministry showed that 30 percent of its prison population was HIV positive compared with 16 percent of the general adult population ages 15 to 49. Levy believes that the disproportionate spread of HIV in prisons is the result of unprotected sex, intravenous drug use and inadequate health care.

"The conditions in which these prisoners are confined and the overcrowding increase still further vulnerability to disease, which is also worsened by the shortage of food that the prisons are able to provide," Levy said.

Mozambique's health and justice ministries will soon sign a memorandum of understanding in order to form a joint effort in improving prison health. Prison medical staff will also receive special training to better address inmate health concerns.

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