

## **As It Is – August 13, 2013**

Hello and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember.

Today we tell about how some prisoners in Indonesian jails use their money to get special privileges and services.

We hear concerns that women in Afghanistan may lose some of the human rights they have gained when international troops withdraw.

Finally, we note the anniversary of the start of construction on this date in 1961 of what was to become the Berlin Wall.

### **Indonesian Prison Inmates Buy Special Privileges**

Media reports say prisoners in Indonesia can buy house cleaning services, illegal drugs and even sex for the right price. Indonesia is again debating favoritism for wealthy Indonesian prisoners

This time, the issue came to the country's attention when a young woman said she and her boyfriend had sex and used illegal drugs in a private room in prison. The boyfriend of 22-year-old model Vanny Rossyane was sentenced to death this July. Freddy Budiman had been found guilty of trying to import illegal drugs from China.

Budiman was already in Jakarta's Cipinang prison on separate drug charges. He was said to operate his illegal drug business from prison using cell phones.

Leopold Sudaryono is the law coordinator at the Asia Foundation in Jakarta. He says that prisoners pay for everything in jail, from luxuries to necessary things such as food, soap and a bed.

"Since the resources are scarce here, they [inmates] need to pay for the resources like food, even for the mattresses..."

He says prisoners who can't pay for these things and who don't have family support need to work inside prison serving other prisoners.

Indonesian prisons suffer from corruption, overcrowding, poor operations and a lack of resources. Prison guards earn about \$300 a month. They can also make money by letting prisoners have cell phones and other banned goods.

Mister Sudaryono says this illegal system can actually help bring calm to extremely crowded jails.

Today there are around 160,000 prisoners across the country. Indonesian jails struggle to provide housing and food. Prison officials are not able to offer rehabilitation services like education or counseling.

Mr. Sudaryono says there is only one guard for every 900 prisoners in the most crowded prisons.

“Overcrowding is not only unique to Indonesia or other developing countries. Actually countries like the U.S. and Australia also have problems with overcrowding, but the problem is in Indonesia, the rate is just so extraordinary. I mean we can have rates like 600-700 percent overcrowding in a number of prisons.”

This month more than 200 prisoners escaped after rioting in an overcrowded prison in Sumatra.

I’m Steve Ember, and you’re listening to As It Is from VOA Learning English.

## **Concerns over Loss of Afghan Women’s Rights when International Troops Withdraw**

The planned withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan is only 18 months away. A new United Nations report says gains for women could be lost in those months. Milagros Ardin tells us more.

Enforcement of the rights of women has greatly increased since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Afghan women now go to school, work, and hold government positions. But that progress could be threatened.

Nicole Ameline heads the U.N Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. She says Afghan officials have told her that women's rights will be defended after international troops leave.

"I have the official commitment of the (U.N.) delegation of Afghanistan. Before us they said, "We agree with you, women's rights are not negotiable."

Ms. Ameline calls that good news. But, she says other nations must work hard to keep women's rights an important issue in Afghanistan. A recent U.N. study on equal rights finds conditions for women in Afghanistan are among the worst in the world.

The report says there is much violence against Afghan women, including stoning, rape and abuse in the family. It notes increasing attacks on girls' schools by Taliban groups. These attacks include the suspected poisoning of girls.

Ms. Ameline says she is afraid women's rights could be lost during peace negotiations with the Taliban. Only nine women serve on the 70-member High Peace Council. The group was established to negotiate an end to conflict with the Islamic group.

"The situation is absolutely fragile. We know that the next 18 months will be totally crucial for women's rights."

In 2009, President Karzai signed an order to end violence against women but the national assembly has not yet approved it. Two months ago, strong criticism stopped debate on the law after only 15 minutes. I'm Milagros Ardin

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## **Remembering a Grim Symbol of the Cold War**

"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." [Crowd cheers]

That was U.S. President Ronald Reagan, standing at the Brandenburg Gate, in what was then West Berlin. He was addressing the Soviet Premier, Mikhail Gorbachev. The year was 1987.

The “wall” he was talking about was an ugly symbol of the Cold War – the Berlin Wall.

Berlin had been a divided city since the end of World War Two, when the victorious Allied powers, which included the Soviet Union, partitioned it. Indeed Germany had been a divided country. East Germany was under communist control, and Berlin was a part of East Germany.

West Berlin was a prosperous western-style democracy. East Berlin was under the control of a communist government with strong ties to the Soviet Union. But people could travel freely between the eastern and western sectors.

Many chose to leave the communist area for a better life. The outflow included professionals, who were hard to replace.

On August 13, 1961, East Germany closed the border between East and West Berlin and put up a fence, guarded by soldiers, to divide the two areas. Some people thought it would disappear. But the fence quickly grew into a wall, with guard towers and barbed wire.

Over time, many people tried to cross to the Western sector. Many were captured and sent to prison or killed for their attempts to get around, over, or under the wall.

For 28 years, the Berlin Wall stood as a sign of the severe tension between Western nations and the Soviet Union. Finally, in November of 1989, the East German government opened the Berlin Wall, to great celebrations on both sides.

[Horns and people cheering as Berlin Wall is opened]

In the days that followed, citizens of Berlin and East German troops with bulldozers began tearing it down.

[Song "Freiheit" (Freedom) being sung as Berlin Wall is opened]

And that's our program for today. I'm Steve Ember. Thanks for joining us.