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The Prison Child Dilemma: An Assessment of Human Rights Infringements and Custodial Autonomy in Bolivian Prisons

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The primary focus of this study is to assess the healthcare conditions and availability for imprisoned women and children in Bolivia. The international research has recently been faced with an overwhelming dilemma of children being subjected unjustly to prison conditions due to circumstances of parental incarceration. Commonly referred to as prison children, these dependents, ranging from newborns to adolescents, are often left to fend for themselves. Many of these children are at risk due to a lack of better alternative. Research has indicated that while there is a tremendous threat to the safety, development, and overall wellbeing of innocent children residing in prison, one benefit includes that of remaining close to their mothers during key emotional, physical, and mental development stages. Threats to these children persist in the categories of security and protection from abuse and sexual harassment, denial of rights to education, physical recreation, proper nutrition, and most importantly due medical attention. Deterioration of healthcare rights for women and children is currently one of the most significant sectors of human rights violations. Recent proposed legislative resolutions include development of an international prison monitoring system for nations that subject prisoners to sub-human conditions due to socioeconomic disparities, birthing and childcare provisions for imprisoned mothers, and child-sensitive prison facilities. Community and non-governmental organizations are also developing prison care systems for children entering prisons, as well as availability of well-trained and more specialized medical staff to attend to the specific needs of women in prisons. A final resolution in this particular study will include that of development of a child welfare system specific to Bolivia that can be later adapted to other economically disadvantaged countries, modeled after the present system in the United States and otherwise compatible with nations’ respective resource bases.

Examples of afflicted countries
Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Peru, and Colombia.

Hypotheses
- Mothers in prison are often sole caretakers of their children.
- Like their mothers, the majority of children living in prison come from poorer socio-economic backgrounds: women prisoners in Venezuela are usually first-time drug dealers, young, single mothers with three to four children.
- Separation of children and mothers can be detrimental to development at an early age.
- Guardians left with choice of either passing children on to relatives (if applicable) or taking children with them.
- Children who follow parents to prison are feeling innocent and not bound to all of the same constraints.
- Children who are not privileged enough to be sent to boarding schools or receive with other family members are subject to harsh conditions in prisons, which are sometimes even more pernicious to children than to adults.
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Violence Against Prisoners
The average cost of care for younger inmates is approximately $21,000 per year, while the cost of care for older inmates is approximately $70,000 per year (Eiders, Paterniti, and Mayes 43).

Conclusions
The U.S. exhibits a well-developed child welfare system that operates based on foster housing and adoption as an alternative to orphanages and potential for homelessness. This outcome may be due to a “street” living. Even children or minors convicted of crimes are housed separately in juvenile detention centers prior to completing their sentences at adult penitentiaries as adolescents. Thus, the trend towards child residence in prisons is nonexistent in the U.S., a nation which subsequently serves as a model for other nations seeking reform in prison systems and even healthcare.

Despite a lack of prevalence in the U.S., the welfare of prison children still remains a pressing point of concern for the yet affiliated international community. It may be argued that prisoners do not deserve the attention of the government as penury for the crimes that they have committed, but turning a blind eye will not better the morality of humans towards the suffering of others, whether men, women, or children, regardless of their past or moral conviction. Moreover, ignorance will not resolve the current problems faced by the children that hold all of the potential for the direction of future generations. Recognition of the issue and implementation of an appropriate model for its resolution are only two key steps in the long road to eradicating violations on prison children once and for all.

Implications of Single Parenting

The Intellectual and Economic Poverty Line

Bolivia is the most populated male prison in La Paz and it in 2005 it contained 200 children. Bolivian children have a difficult time and education, healthcare, nutrition, etc. and due to the treatment of these neglected rights we face disaster, sanitary conditions, and protection against forms of abuse.

San Pedro is the most populated male prison in La Paz and at 2005 it contained 200 children. Children there receive less than basic education and education opportunities are limited. They are also subjected to discrimination by human rights groups. The government removed most children from prisons just over a decade ago when a young girl was raped and murdered. However with many families unable to support them, the children trickle back into the prisons. For many Bolivian families, whilst prison is not the best place for their children to live, it may seem like the lesser of two evils when faced with added poverty as the alternative.

Human Rights: Drawing the Line of Conviction

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The Justified Call for a Double Standard

- A fundamental threat facing women and children in prisons is sexual abuse and physical harassment.
- Male guards represent the primary pool of prison staff even in prisons that are dominated by female inmates – call for female guards.
- Women additionally require gynecological care and supplies, nursing and pregnancy amenities, etc.
- Prison children can accompany mothers and families in each other's situations.

The new addition to the Child Welfare Act requires that a child be taken to prison only when the child welfare authorities estimate that it is in her or his best interest. It sends the message that a child is better off living in prison with his hard-working parents and is already $89,000 per year (Eiders, Paterniti, and Mayes 43).