

The Implications of COVID - 19 on the Human Rights of Women Prisoners in India: An Analysis

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I. Introduction

The Covid – 19 Pandemic has caused unprecedented difficulties for the Governments and other authorities all over the World. With the population density, low literacy, high poverty rate, as well as a high prison population density, the problems which have been faced by the Indian authorities due to the Pandemic has been on the higher side, and the brunt of these problems are being faced by the prisoners. The impact has been heavily felt, especially in the case of women prisoners. Even some of the better resourced prisons in India have found it difficult to mitigate the adverse impact which has been caused due to the Pandemic.

Prisons are instruments designed to house people who have broken the law, reform and restore them back into the society. However, the prison system in India, which in itself is insufficient to meet all the basic needs and rights of the prisoners, is further not equipped to deal with women as prisoners. Even the prisons, are designed only for men and as such the women prisoners are forced to compromise on basic sanitization as well as hygiene standards. Therefore, such approach creates several hurdles with respect to the rights of women. And while it may be true that initially men constituted the majority of prisoners, the number of female prisoners has been rising continuously. The number of women prisoners till June 2020, in Indian prisons, as given by the report of NCRB stood as follows, which also shows an increase of approximately 3.3 % since the year 2000

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