

## CHILDREN LIVING IN JAILS WORRIES SC

Relevant for: Government Policies & Welfare Schemes | Topic: Welfare of Children - Schemes & their performance; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies

The committee would look into what reforms could be introduced.

A committee headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court will be formed to tackle the issue of children living in prisons merely because their mothers are convicts.

A Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta has directed the government to form a panel headed by a former apex court judge, assisted by two or three Central government officers, to study the problems of mothers and children living inside prisons. Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal, for the Centre, agreed with the court's view.

The order came after Supreme Court's amicus curiae and advocate Gaurav Agarwal submitted a report showing that there were 18 jails exclusively for women. Plus there are separate areas for women in other jails, but there is a huge lack of space for women inmates. He said these jails were not modelled to house women inmates, especially those with minor children staying with them.

The committee would also look into what reforms could be introduced within the prison walls.

The court said the Centre should issue a notification on the setting up of the committee, highlighting the importance of prison reforms and the fundamental right to life and dignity of the prisoners.

The court ordered training manuals to be circulated to the Directors-General of Prisons and Secretaries of Prison Department in each State government/ Union Territory and also to three training institutes, that is, Institute of Corrections Administration, Chandigarh; Regional Institute of Correctional Administration, Kolkata; and Academy of Prison and Correctional Administration, Vellore.

The court advised the Centre that criminals sentenced to imprisonment for six months or a year should be allocated social service duties rather than be sent to further choke the already overflowing prisons.

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