

Pennsylvania Prisoners Given 'Rights' Code Based on U.N

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HARRISBURG, Pa., Oct. 4 — State Attorney General J. Shane Creamer announced today the promulgation of a "Bill of Rights" for prisoners in Pennsylvania state prisons that he said insured them the right to be treated with dignity as human beings while imprisoned.

The bill takes the form of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners adopted by the United Nations in 1955 and considered by the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Criminal Offenders in Kyoto, Japan, in 1970.

Thus far, Mr. Creamer said, no nation has enacted the standard minimum rules into law or has any American state.

Posted at 8 Institutions

Mr. Creamer called the code 'a declaration of human rights for prisoners.' It was posted on bulletin boards of the state's eight correctional institutions over the weekend at the direction of the Commissioner of Correction, Allyn Sielaff.

The code states that the prescribed minimum treatment rules "are not intended to describe in detail a model system of penal institutions" but "to set up what is generally accepted as being good principle and practice in the treatment of prisoners and the management of institutions."

"Unconvicted prisoners are presumed to be innocent and shall be treated as such," the rules state.

The general

The general application also covers registration books, separation of categories, accommodations, personal hygiene, clothing and bedding, food, exercise and sport, medical services, discipline and punishment, instruments of restraint, information to and complaints by prisoners, contact with the outside

side library availability, religious freedom, retention of prisoners' property, notification of death, illness, transfer, etc., removal of prisoners, institutional personnel, inspection of institutions, privileges, work, education and recreation, social relations and after-care, insane and mentally abnormal prisoners.

'Untried Prisoners'

The rules require that persons arrested or imprisoned but who have not yet been tried and sentenced will be referred to as "untried prisoners."

These prisoners are to be treated according to a "special regimen" that the code described "in its essential requirements only." These specifications include the following:

¶ "Untried prisoners shall be kept separate from convicted prisoners. Young untried prisoners shall be kept separate from adults and shall in principle be detained in separate institutions."

¶ "Untried prisoners shall sleep singly in separate rooms, with the reservation of different local custom in respect of the climate."

¶ "Within the limits compatible with the good order of the institution, untried prisoners may, if they so desire, have their food procured at their own expense from the outside."

¶ "An untried prisoner shall be allowed to wear his own clothing if it is clean and suitable. If he wears prison dress, it shall be different from that supplied to convicted prisoners."

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¶ "An untried prisoner shall always be offered opportunity to work, but shall not be required to work. If he chooses to work, he shall be paid for it."

The code prohibits corporal punishment as well as punishment by "handcuffs, chains, irons or straitjackets."