

Sodomy in Lesotho prisons causes concern

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MASERU - Lesotho's prisons authorities are concerned about deaths from Aids, and the incidence of sodomy in the country's largest prison.

Recently four inmates of Maseru Central Prison were found guilty of sodomy on fellow inmates and were sentenced to a total of 10 years.

"On average, two prisoners die a week (from HIV/Aids) in the prison," the officer commanding the prison, Senior Superintendent Matete Mahao, recently told the Lesotho Parliament's committee on HIV/Aids.

Despite the deaths, prison authorities would not distribute condoms to prisoners.

"Such a move would definitely encourage more acts of sodomy," said Mahao.

Mahao said prisons had programmes to inform prisoners on the effects of the pandemic.

The secretary of the committee, Sello Maphalla, said deaths of inmates due to HIV/Aids and opportunistic infections forced them to visit all the main prisons in the country to gain first hand information.

"Our visit was in response to various reports that prisoners were living in appalling conditions not conducive to human habitation and that at least two inmates were dying each week in the prison from HIV/Aids-related diseases.

"Apart from the fact that the prison cells are overcrowded, the prisoners also idle too much following withdrawal of skills training... which used to be taught in prison.

"This led prisoners to engage in acts of sodomy that increase HIV infections," he added.

The Maseru Central Prison, which has the capacity to accommodate 500-600, inmates now accommodates over 1500.

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