Reviewer’s report

Title: ‘Mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give’: Prison conditions and the health situation and rights of children incarcerated with their mothers in sub-Saharan African prisons.

Version: 1 Date: 30 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Juliane Kippenberg

Reviewer’s report:

Dear Prof. Van Hout, dear Ms Mhlanga-Gunda,

this is an interesting article and I am grateful for the opportunity to review it.

Unfortunately the tables and the figure with the flowchart are not included in the draft I received, making it hard for me to judge the methodology. I am assuming that they are sound and continuing the review based on that assumption.

The structure is clear and convincing, and the findings are clearly described.

However, I am missing reference to more NGO reports, such as the one by PRI on the imprisonment of children with their mothers (https://cdn.penalreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/PRI_FHRI-Report_-Implementation-of-GC-No1-WEB.pdf). It would have been desirable to include this and potentially other NGO reports even if they are not listed in the databases you searched.

I am also missing reference to a central legal document, the General Comment by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on Children of incarcerated and imprisoned parents and primary caregivers (Article 30 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child).

The quality of written in English is poor in some sentences; the articles relies too heavily on nominal style. The text needs and edit. For example, the underpinning research question should be reworked to something like this: "What is known in the literature about THE health situation and unique rights VIOLATIONS of children incarcerated ..."

The article sometimes refers to authors as numbers in brackets and this is hard to read.

There is mention of a Rapporteur but his full title and function is not given and explained.

The sentence "In Namibia and Kenya, a nutritionist designed dietary requirements for children and their mothers" is unclear and needs explanation.

The subsection on health consequences relating to nutrition contains testimony that belongs in the previous section.
A quote is given without introduction on page 16 (bottom).

Some of the findings lack an overall these sentence and come over as "bitty".

I hope these comments are useful and wish you all the best,

Juliane Kippenberg (Human Rights Watch)

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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