

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL-PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITY OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THEIR PRESENTATION IN THE ROMANIAN MEDIA

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Abstract: *In the life of the inmates, the Church has a dominant role, being the one that gives them the strength to cope with all the troubles. It is the Church which helps the inmates to realize that only by renouncing previous immoral life and following the teachings of Jesus Christ, may become another man, a spiritual man. Knowing in advance that the prisoner is to be released, the priest chaplain is one who will give him advice spiritual needs and they have to follow, proving thereby that it is a Christian and an honest citizen, that society so desperately needs. The activities that Orthodox Church provides to inmates are very poor presented in the media. The purpose of this case study is to describe the interest that Romanian media give for the social activities of the Romanian Orthodox Church. As a research method we chose participatory observation. Namely, I noticed from the inside the activities of interest and I analyzed the news that promotes the activities carried out by the Romanian Orthodox Church. In consultation with the program, a dance-based exercise class for seniors was approved, designed, advertised, and implemented. Participants displayed signs of enjoyment during the class meetings and the small class size allowed all to engage in a dynamic, powerful, and rewarding experience of dance regardless of level of ability. Through repetition and reinforcement of movements participants learned dance steps often working beyond their conceived limitations. Dance has shown promise in improved fitness, social connections and overall physical and cognitive benefits. These social philanthropic activities are very weakly highlighted in the secular press, as well as the Christian press often omits them (except for parts of the press center of the Romanian Patriarchate).*

Key words: *social-philanthropic activity; prison; inmates; media; church*

1. Introduction

The Romanian Orthodox Church has been socially and philanthropically active since its formation on this Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory. Starting from the precepts of Christ the Savior, the Church was close to her spiritual sons wherever they were: private homes, hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, etc.

The penitentiary environment is a society in all its power. It is a miniature society, governed both by state laws and unwritten rules, which often have more power than any other order. People deprived of their liberty know very well their responsibilities, but also their rights. Unfortunately, they focus a lot on their rights, which at some point creates this feeling of social incapacity, which leads to social maladaptation. Basically, people deprived of their liberty project their problems on society. Someone has to help them! In this way they no longer consider it necessary to make any effort in order to overcome the problems of life.

Along with the sanctifying grace, its teaching and the prayer for the spiritual sons, together with the spiritual means of calling to the new life in Jesus Christ, the Church has used in its mission all the means it has to help both spiritually and materially those in need.

The church, as an autonomous institution vis-à-vis the state, has had to organize and function as an institution of the state where it exists since its inception. In this

sense, the Church must make use of all means of social and material organization in order to help her faithful. The mission of the Church has required the use of all means, for without them neither the life nor the work of the Church in the world can be assured.

Of course, a distinction must be made between their use for the organization and work of the Church and another is their use to satisfy the common needs of the lives of clergy and believers, or at least to alleviate their suffering. The Church must provide the material means and then distribute them, according to the specific needs, which are necessary for the maintenance of the cult and the ministers of the Church and in another way for the help or social protection of the faithful.

Any attempt to acquire material means can have no other purpose than to obtain salvation by the ministers and believers of the Church. Money should not be used for its own purpose, but to do good deeds. Therefore, the social-philanthropic side of the Church is a defining one for all its actions in society. Basically this mission is a sacred duty left by the Savior Christ. Without neglecting to procure the material means it needs, the Church has been concerned and must not lose sight of the needs of the faithful, but as a method of facilitating their earthly life in order to obtain the eternal kingdom. Scripture itself considers material values to be of no value unless they are accompanied and confirmed by acts of almsgiving. The mission of the Church is not only to make known the word of God and its fulfillment, but also to its correct and coherent observance. The Orthodox Church and even any other cult cannot simply stand impassive to the needs of its neighbor. But who is the neighbor. As the Savior Christ tells us, the neighbor is the one who needs help, even if he is a stranger. While working on Trinitas TV I learned about the extraordinary case of the Albanian Patriarchate. A country where Orthodox are 4% of the population, the rest being Muslims. The patriarchate there alone supports no less than 10 social institutions: hospitals, asylums, orphanages, of course most of the beneficiaries are Muslims, but this has not prevented the Orthodox Church there to provide quality social services at high standards.

1. The social mission of the Church of the Romanian Orthodox Church

Philanthropy has always been part of the Church's mission. Ramsay (1968) discovered the important role of the Orthodox Church in the first centuries in the philanthropic involvement of the Church in the society of the first centuries. He states the important role that St. Basil the Great played in the society of his day as a pioneer of social medical institutions: the cities founded by Greek kings had been the centers from which Greek influence had penetrated the whole country. Although the teaching of the gospel does not have an eminently social role, it does encourage interpersonal Christian behavior based on empathy, compassion, and good works. The fact that the Church has always practiced philanthropy is a well-known fact, but it has not tried and did not want to replace this component of the state where any church or cult exists, but comes to the support of the state and tries to meet certain current social needs of believers. they, who are also citizens of the state in whose territory the church is located. Basically we can say that the forerunner of social services and the institution that implemented social services in the world was the Church. She took the example of the One who founded it, the Savior Christ who performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to saturate the crowds that were present at His preach.

In each penitentiary in Romania there is a chapel or a liturgical space arranged, and the chaplain priests from these penitentiaries are employees of the National Administration of Penitentiaries. Thus, 8 hours a day from Sunday to Thursday, the

chaplain is present in the penitentiary, where he performs religious services, advises people deprived of their liberty, confesses and educates them.

All social and philanthropic teaching is based on the following biblical quotations:

„Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second, like her, is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Matthew, 22: 35-40)

The penitentiary currently has a special significance. A people is considered civilized or not, depending on how it behaves with disadvantaged categories: minors, the elderly, people with special needs, the unemployed, detainees, etc.

The penitentiary is a function of justice and not of power. Therefore, it provides a distinct social service, its main purpose being to serve the community. The word penitentiary comes from the Latin *penitentiae*, which means penance, repentance. So the main role of the penitentiary is to make the person deprived of liberty aware of his state of abnormality in accordance with the world in which he lives. Thus, in the penitentiary, the detainee must be aware of his reprehensible deeds, be sorry for what he did and decide not to commit them again.

The prison population is growing all over the world. Along with small and large criminals, there are people that society does not protect: alcoholics, drug addicts, the mentally ill, the unemployed. As a result, the prison environment tends to increasingly mirror our inability to socially integrate as many people as possible. "Exclusive car", "hospital without medical care", "social trash", this is a warehouse designed to isolate "worthless samples" and not only those who are punished by law for their crimes and offenses.

The restrictive environment of freedom is a closed environment, an environment that irreversibly affects any being, traumatic, little known by those outside it. Each category of people on either side of grace leaves that place with a bitter taste, with an indelible imprint. The continual effort to save the inner self is hard to describe in words. For prison staff, the "fight" is fiercer: firstly with themselves - because they must not remain contaminated by the environment in which they work, and secondly with the one deprived of liberty, which must be strive to educate him, to humanize him and to return him to society ready to face the norms of coexistence imposed by it.

Here is how Pop (1924: 153) describes life in penitentiaries:

„Life together in prison, far from correcting, cleansing the soul of the convict, seems destined to end with his loss. It is like a normal school of crime, the party of evil is fighting society and morality. He gives his public lectures, gives his private lessons, preaches aloud or speaks in his ear, provokes disobedience, revolt, makes fun of everything and everything, threatens and everything comes to his aid.... All these lead man to perish. Only great love could escape him. It is difficult for the purest soul that has passed through this atmosphere to remain undefiled. Thus, society, with the authority of its laws, with its police, with its gendarmes, with all its moral and material power, will often be forced to be held in place by a weak and withered being, installed in prison like a spider in the middle. his canvas. Like the rotten fruit that spoils other fruits, this abject being corrupts everything that comes near, infects and rots the ear that receives its words, poisons the soul of its speeches. The prison is the one that recruits the army of evil.”

So only a great "love" could save and recover for society a person deprived of liberty, that love, in my opinion, can only spring from the Source of Life, which is the Savior Christ. This is one of the reasons why I approached this topic. Also, in our scientific approach we will try to show that only the adoption of a Christian life can lead to the social reintegration of persons deprived of liberty, and the priest is the one who can and must complete the change of those in detention, to restore them healthy to society. and peers.

Also, a Christian life and attitude can make these fellows useful to the society and the Orthodox Church from which they come: „For when I was with you, I told you plainly, 'Whoever does not want to work nor eat.' But we hear that some of you live in disorder, work nothing, and cling to nothing.” (2 Thessalonians 3: 10-11)

The penitentiary environment is not governed or inhabited by dragons, but by people who have altered more than others the Image of God in us. Priests have always been considered essential factors in religious life and at the same time people invested with divine power that strengthens and makes responsible the particularities of pastoral-missionary work. Their essential mission was to create and maintain the connection between God and the faithful, by performing religious ceremonies and rites (Braniste, 2004). „Every high priest, being taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” (Hebrews 5: 1).

The Church is the institution that guarantees, ordains and blesses the priestly work in all its directions. Using the spiritual and religious dimension of man, the church institution is made available to man, its head being the very "Son of Man" (John 5:27). "The Church is connected to the world by her created human nature.... She must walk the path of historical kenosis by fulfilling her saving mission. The members of the Church are called to take part in the mission of Christ, in His service to the world, "that the world may believe" (John 17:21)."

Caring for those who are suffering, this way of manifesting the priestly work towards the sons in difficulty, occupies an important place in the wide area of pastoral and missionary activity of the priesthood. We consider, therefore, the missionary and sacrificial component of the pastoral care of persons deprived of liberty, a work that is always up to date, with "increasingly nuanced demands and in the context of rapid changes in society, as well justified as possible" (Jurca, 2007: 10), in a continuous progression, always requiring people of vocation. personal knowledge will allow us to consider a favorable response to the requested call.

„The pastor must answer the question competently: Who am I? If he wants to correctly interpret the correspondence between self-realization as a person and fulfillment in his pastoral mission. Secondly, self-knowledge is a condition for relating to the other as for another, that is, without imposing one's own demands on him with authority.” (Tia, 2003: 141). Following Christ the Incarnate is the ideal solution. The Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, is and remains the supreme, perfect and ideal model of the Christian priest as shepherd of souls, he is „the Good Shepherd who lays down his soul for His sheep” (John 10:11).

This interpersonal encounter, between the priest, on the one hand, as the man who defies the disease himself and faces suffering, and detained, disoriented and unbalanced, on the other. This intersection and finds the explanation in the desire to help each fellow to discover the presence of God the One who gives His peace to those who seek it.

Each one experiences for himself every day a word or a gesture that does him good, on which occasion a seemingly banal reflection invigorates a wound as small as

itself, the pain of which is alleviated to some extent. At the same time, each of us notices the reactions that the way of being, thinking and acting provokes around him, respectively: trust, peace, surprise, hatred, anxiety, etc. Everything that affects a person in his normal life resonates with the same intensity in people affected by the disease, those who are burdened by old age or live with a disability assumed every day.

In the life of a detainee, the role of the spiritual priest is essential both in mental healing, but especially in his spiritual healing. The Holy Fathers say that the spiritual father must spend in continual prayer and reach the highest rungs of ascetic life. The priest must take care of those imprisoned with boundless love modeled on the Most Holy Trinity.

The love of the Trinity is perfect, because it is a love that lacks nothing, that has no beginning and no end, has no insufficiency, but it is plenary, eternal, infinite and perfect. The love of the Holy Trinity that Orthodoxy bears witness to beautifies the life and testimony of the Orthodox Church inspired by the Trinity." (Tulcan, 2011: 336).

The first step the clergyman must take to help the closed one is understanding, which is different from that vaguely close feeling of pity. The understanding of the neighbor implies on the part of the clergyman the effort to feel morally and even physically the disappointments, sufferings and anxieties of the person deprived of liberty. This causes him to assume with the penitent his suffering. „But it is not enough just to pity our unfortunate neighbor, but we must move especially to his help by deed... Through his spontaneous gesture, springing from mercy, he who gives alms bows with love to the sufferings of the fellow, and he finds that his pain is understood and the same love is detached from him from the one who helps him" (Popa, 2009: 336).

From the deep compassion that the spiritual priest gets to feel, obedience is born, being of course an active obedience. The confidence limit should not be forced, the detainee should not be pushed to say more than he feels he has to say. The result of such a wrong and at the same time involuntary judgment could lead to a misunderstanding of the role of the spiritual priest who risks guiding us on a dead end. If we want to help him and bring him on the path to the Kingdom, it is necessary to have the same starting point and move forward together at the same pace. An obstacle that must be overcome in the obedience relationship between the clergyman and the penitent is the projection of one's own psychological feelings, of one's own problems on him. "It is therefore important to empty ourselves of our own problems and to be totally open to the sick, to be able to perceive him exactly in the way he needs to be perceived" (Popa, 2009: 336). If we do not open ourselves sincerely to the suffering person and do not try to live the same feelings with him, if we do not actively go through the suffering with him, the spiritual-penitent relationship is a formal one, empty and devoid of content. Undoubtedly, the role of the clergyman is an extremely difficult one, because the traps in which he can fall are numerous and the risk of making mistakes is high. Consider Job's words: "I have always heard such things. you are all pitiful comforters.

„Behavior worthy of a spiritual parent can be expressed in two key words: standing by and being in love. It is a "state of being" that does not want to impose itself, that does not want to be a burden for the sick, but that is a continuous openness, in which love dominates and any other feeling to remain in the background, without that this means a lack of communication or an insensitivity to the pain of the sick." (Popa, 2009: 336).

If the relationship between the spiritual and the sick is based on love, it cannot be understood as a hierarchical relationship: healthy-sick, comforting-comforted because this could lead to a certain inequality, it gives a feeling of domination of one by the other.. The relationship with the spiritual father is never a domination, but a ministry: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew, 20:28).

Speaking about the clergyman-disciple relationship, Father Professor Constantin Necula in the show Word for the Soul broadcast on Trinitas television, said: We often do not find a clergyman, but we go for hours through malls to look for different things. Some say they do not get along with the clergyman. But the clergyman does not have to understand you, you have to understand God what he wants through your clergyman. If we do not have a clergyman we run the risk of falling into despair, and this must be healed only by the medicine of Christ. Hope above hope jumps us into eternity.

In order for man to heal both physically and mentally, the spiritual priest must make him aware of the importance of repentance. And true repentance is born in the depths of the soul, from there coming to the surface our own thoughts, feelings, deeds, and disgust for our sins.

„The soul is washed not with ordinary water, but with tears, prayers, almsgiving, fasting ... From the infinite divine mercy, this is how we cleanse ourselves from our sins. Repentance finds its fulfillment in the Sacrament of Confession. The Lord Himself in the presence of the priest or bishop - the witness of repentance - takes upon Himself our sins, forgives them, reconciles us and unites us with the Church, restores to us the divine grace which we have lost. By healing the soul, the Sacrament of Confession helps to heal the body, as many diseases are the consequences of the sinful way of life.” (Zorin, 2014: 231).

2. The ministry of the priest in the penitentiary

The ministry of the priest in the penitentiary is not very different from that of the parish priest, both having as their main concern the salvation of the faithful. The penitentiary priest regulates his activity according to a normative framework established by the governing bodies of the A.N.P.

The priest carries out in the penitentiary establishments both pastoral activities, according to the respective doctrine and cult, as well as activities of moral-religious education, for the persons deprived of liberty, at their request and in non-discriminatory conditions.

The performance of the activity by the priest is conditioned by the arrangement of an adequate space in each detention unit, thus guaranteeing the access of the entire penitentiary population to this type of services.

➤ **Professional skills:**

1. organizing and officiating religious services specific to worship;
2. moral-religious counseling and education of detainees;
3. initiating, maintaining and improving the detainees' relationship with the support environment and the community throughout the execution of the sentence. activities:
 - depending on the addressability, the activities can be classified into: - activities for the general population; - activities addressed to risk groups / those with special needs;
 - depending on the modalities of the activities, the activities can be: - group activities; - individual activities;

- depending on the type of activities, they can be classified into: - activities of organizing and officiating religious services specific to the cult; - catechesis activities; - spiritual activities; - moral-religious assistance activities; - educational activities; - collaboration activities with the support environment (family, governmental and non-governmental organizations) and with representatives of other religious denominations;
- depending on the moments of the executive route of the person deprived of liberty, we can define several levels of activity of the priest: activities of knowledge and moral-religious assistance carried out during the quarantine and observation period; current activities carried out during the execution of the sentence; activities carried out during the preparation for release.

The church must also take care of people deprived of their liberty not only during detention, but also after their release. This concern is shown by the chaplain of the prison, in which the released prisoner served his sentence. Knowing in advance that the prisoner is about to be released, the chaplain is the one who will give him the spiritual advice he needs and must follow, thus proving that he is a true Christian and an honest citizen, of whom society needs it so much.

It is desirable that the priest, together with the psychologist, sociologist and social worker of the prison, go to the place of residence of the detainee to be released, two or three weeks before release and, here, in St. At Mass, the detainee should be presented to the community as the "lost sheep" that Jesus Christ brought back into the bosom of His Church to continue to be part of His flock. In this way, the prisoner, after being released from prison, will no longer be frustrated by his past, because he knows that in the Church he will always find relief and support.

The benevolent attitude of true Christians will help the released prisoner to overcome the wickedness of some more easily, to reintegrate into society, and to realize that only with Christ and the Church he has unseemly established through sacrifice from the cross, he is on the right path. The parish priest of the community of which the released prisoner is a part will be his spiritual father, who will continue the mission of the chaplain in prison, whose mission is to win such a man for the Kingdom of Heaven.

The priest of the community will plant in the soul of the former prisoner the word of the Gospel of Christ, will drive away his sadness and will plant his love for God, for his neighbor and for the Church. The priest of the community will also arrange for the released detainee to find a job to earn the money necessary for daily life.

The Church shows special care to the released prisoners and, through the voice of her servants, calls them to union with Christ, through communion with the Body and Blood of the Lord, thus preparing for them the path that leads to the Kingdom of Love.

In the words, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). The Savior Christ makes the Holy Apostles aware that their purpose is to spread the word of God to all people. This commandment of the Savior Christ must also be fulfilled by the followers of the Holy Apostles, that is, by the members of the church hierarchy.

Today the Church is present in society through her priests. This explains her mission in schools, hospitals, the army and in prisons. Precisely because the Church cares for her spiritual sons, she exercises her mission even in penitentiary units, sending priests to serve the spiritual needs of those deprived of liberty, thereby demonstrating that she has not forgotten those who are mentally ill. The priest from the penitentiary unit, although he exercises his mission in a special environment, is obliged to carry out his work with great zeal; but at the same time he must maintain the

relationship with the local bishop. The eparchial hierarch is the one who sends to these penitentiary units the ministering priests for the spiritual needs of those in detention.

Just as the parish priest submits to the diocesan hierarch, so the priest in the penitentiary unit is obliged to prove obedience to the local hierarch. They must conform to and obey the laws of the church, as provided by the canons of our Holy Church. The priest from the penitentiary unit is obliged to present to the local hierarch the fruits of his work, to ask for his advice whenever necessary, to participate in the biannual priestly conferences, and in these conferences to present the difficult situations he faces in order to could be solved. The relationship with the local hierarch can be maintained by the penitentiary priest and by the diocesan delegates in the penitentiary where the respective priest carries out his activity. Also, this relationship can be maintained through the invitations that the penitentiary priest can make to the local hierarch on different occasions (patron saint, services, anniversaries, etc.).

In the event that the hierarch of the place accepts the invitation of the penitentiary priest, depending on the program he has, it is good for the mayor of the place to address the words of soul building and encouragement to those in detention, to prove that the Church is not she hates sinners, but gathers them to her bosom like a loving mother. On the occasion of the visit made by the diocesan hierarch in the penitentiary unit, it can be ascertained what are the fruits of the spiritual work, fruits that belong to the minister priest in such a unit. Essential in the relationship of the penitentiary priest with the eparchial hierarch is the submission and respect of the former to his elder, but at the same time, the zeal and love he must have to spread the evangelical teaching of the Holy Church.

Those in detention, although they are a special category of people, should not be neglected and viewed with contempt. On the contrary, they need to be helped, investigated and encouraged in order to cope with detention. The true Christian is the one who applies in daily life the Savior's command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew, 22:39). This love must be materialized by deeds, which adorn the Christian's soul and make it pleasing to God. The first to love the detained horses is the priest. He is obliged to provide the healing balm for the souls of those behind bars and the comfort they need.

In order for his moral-religious activity to bear the desired fruits, it is good for the priest from the penitentiary unit to keep in touch with both the parish priest and the philanthropic associations. Such collaboration is beneficial for all parties involved, but first and foremost it is essential for those in detention. They, seeing that they are being examined from the outside by other people, besides their families, will be able to realize that they are not forgotten by society, but on the contrary, there are people who are with them and who do not forget them.

By maintaining this relationship, the priest in the penitentiary unit can invite the parish priest on various occasions (feast, services, conferences, etc.) among those in detention to share words of edification. Also, the parish priest can come among those deprived of liberty with a group of believers from his parish and at the same time can bring them certain gifts, which could produce a lot of joy for those behind bars. There are many in the penitentiary units who have been forgotten by their families, and these visits by the parish priest accompanied by the faithful volunteers, would help them get through the difficult times they are in, but at the same time they would it helps to understand that being a Christian means being a man with a heart from which to spring love for all.

This collaboration between the penitentiary priest and the parish priest is beneficial for both of them. For the parish priest it is an opportunity to carry out his

mission in a special environment and thus he can enrich his soul, and for the priest from the penitentiary unit it is an occasion of joy, seeing that the other priestly brothers are with him and help him. in the difficult mission he has to accomplish.

4. Research. Reflections in the online press of the philanthropic actions of the Romanian Orthodox Church

4.1. General objectives:

- a) analysis of the efficiency of the social-philanthropic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church;
- b) the society's perception on the social-philanthropic activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church as it is reflected in the Romanian press;

4.2. General objectives:

- a) identifying the level of knowledge of the population regarding the social activities of the Romanian Orthodox Church;
- b) The correct presentation of the activities carried out in the penitentiaries;

4.3. Hypothesis

Nowadays, the Romanian Orthodox Church is accused of not being socially active. So I want to show that although it carries out activities in the Romanian Penitentiaries, in our case the Bucharest Jilava Penitentiary does not represent points of interest for the Romanian press.

4.4. Method

I noticed from the inside the activities of interest and I analyzed the news that promotes the activities carried out by the Romanian Orthodox Church. I searched the internet for all the news, articles or other media materials that show the social-philanthropic events of BOR and I analyzed them from a sociological point of view to show the results.

4.5. Results

1 First news: June 1 at Jilava Penitentiary

First of all, the news was promoted by the BOR press trust: Trinitas TV, Radio Trinitas, Ziarul Lumina, and the Basilica News Agency. The news was also taken over by the Amos news News Agency, an independent press agency and friend of BOR, which took over the original text from the Basilica in its entirety.

2. The second news Sanctification of the chapel of the Bucharest Jilava Penitentiary Due to the presence of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the news was more publicized compared to the other event. First of all, it was presented in the church press, that of the Romanian Patriarchate, but not that of the other Romanian Orthodox bishops and due to the presence of the Patriarch it was the one who officiated the consecration service.

In 4 of the 5 presentations the news is presented in a positive way. On the ziare.com website, the news presented the actual event, but about the object used by the Patriarch of Romania. It was more of a pamphlet, and the main event was omitted.

Conclusions

Although the Bucharest Jilava Penitentiary took place: cultural events occasioned by various important moments in the life of the Romanian people, conferences, shows and social-philanthropic actions on the occasion of the great Christian holidays (Christmas, Easter, etc.), these activities are very weakly highlighted in the secular press, as well as the Christian press he often omits them (with the exception of being part of the press center of the Romanian Patriarchate). As well as all the positive activities are of total disinterest for the media. The only news of interest for the Romanian media are those scandals that take place in the detention space or that have some detainees as perpetrators.

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