

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, currently housing well over 2.3 million inmates and about 7 million in custody of the state (in prison or jail, on probation, or on parole). The rate of incarceration has grown exponentially over the past decade, increasing from one in every 218 U.S. residents in 1990 to one in every 147 U.S. residents in 1999. Prisoners are most often locked within cells that average around 30 square feet (4 ½ by 6 ½ ft.) and are forced to use toilets without privacy right next to their beds. Former Virginia Attorney General Mark Earley testified before the U.S. Congress in 2002 that “anywhere from 250,000 to 600,000” (14,500 of whom are juvenile boys and girls) of America’s 2.3 million inmates have been traumatically lambasted and raped behind bars. Additionally, the New York state correctional system has an HIV rate of 8.5 percent, which continues to be spread deleteriously through rape. The rate of incarceration and prison conditions in the United States is unacceptable. Our tradition compels us to fight for justice and prison must definitely be included. Below are a number of sources and articles that grapple with Jewish notions of what would be a just penal system.

Sources:

<http://utzedek.org/images/sjbm%20prison%20reform.pdf>

<http://utzedek.org/images/prison%20reform%20shiur.pdf>

[http://utzedek.org/files/PRISON%20ARTICLE%20\(MILIN%20HAVIVIN\),%20PDF.pdf](http://utzedek.org/files/PRISON%20ARTICLE%20(MILIN%20HAVIVIN),%20PDF.pdf)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ari-hart/prison-reform-is-a-jewish-issue_b_1074535.html

Get Involved! Contact one of the organizations listed below to work on this issue more directly

- <http://reclaimingfutures.org/>
- <http://www.wpaonline.org/>
- <http://booksthroughbars.org/>
- <https://nationinside.org/>
- <http://justdetention.org/>
- <http://restorativejustice.org/>