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# news release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Overcrowding, Injustice, Corruption Plague World's Prisons: Honduras, Mexico symptomatic of international epidemic

**WASHINGTON, DC, February 21, 2012** – The tragic death toll at last week's prison fire in Comayagua, Honduras, combined with the prison riot in Monterrey, Mexico, Sunday in which 44 more lives were lost, paint a bleak picture of the international justice system.

According to [Prison Fellowship International](#) (PFI), the world's largest prison ministry with 124 member countries, this kind of inhumane treatment and corruption run rampant in the majority of prison systems around the world.

Disasters like Comayagua and Monterrey are inevitable because harsh confinement and security have become the paramount concerns governing the treatment of prisoners.

"The majority of prisoners around the world live in conditions that we wouldn't even tolerate for stray dogs or unwanted pets," said Ron Nikkel, PFI President. "If we heard of this kind of treatment at the local animal shelter, we would have it shut down."

Other problems that plague prisons around the world – especially in developing countries – include systemic violence, malnutrition, and untreated diseases like malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS. Hundreds of thousands more suffer in severe conditions of overcrowding, lack of water and sanitation.

Nikkel has visited nearly 1,000 prisons in more than 100 countries – including Comayagua in Honduras – and has seen firsthand the benign neglect of societies that equate punitive imprisonment with justice. "More than half of the men killed in that fire had been awaiting trial – many of them likely innocent," Nikkel said. "Their supposed temporary imprisonment became their death sentence. I wish I could say this was an anomaly."

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Nikkel estimates that of the 10 million incarcerated worldwide, three million haven't even been tried yet.

"Prisons contribute more to injustice than to justice," Nikkel continued. "Stories like those in Honduras and Mexico are happening around the world all the time – we just don't hear about them unless the body count reaches a certain level. We as world citizens need to become better informed about these issues and respond just as we do to other global humanitarian crises."

Because prisoners in developing nations are often not given basic necessities like food and clothing, each national organization uses indigenous volunteers to work with national governments to bring aid to needy prisoners. Each national Prison Fellowship organization is autonomous, allowing it to tailor its approach to best serve the prison and justice community in its area. PFI volunteers, more than 50,000 in all, in each member country visit places like these, where other people fear to go, to work with prisoners.

PFI provides various in-prison services including visitation, Bible studies, mentoring, educational training, work- and life-skills training and counseling. The ministry also cares for the families of the incarcerated who are often left in desperate economic situations with the main breadwinner in prison. PFI offers aid to inmates' children through the Angel Tree® program and provides counseling to family members, as well as help obtaining life's necessities.

In an effort to improve the lives of prisoners and inspire true justice, PFI works to transform the lives of prisoners who live on the margins of society so they can contribute to their families, communities and societies after they are released.

Prison Fellowship International is active in every region of the world, bringing together Christians from various denominations to improve the spiritual, moral, social and physical well-being of prisoners, ex-prisoners, their families and victims of crime.

More information is available at <http://www.pfi.org>.

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**Note to Editors:** For more information or to arrange an interview with PFI representatives, please visit <http://www.alrcnewskitchen.com/pfi> or contact Steve Yount or Melany Ethridge at 972.267.1111 or via email at [steve@alarrayross.com](mailto:steve@alarrayross.com) or [Melany@alarrayross.com](mailto:Melany@alarrayross.com).