

Inhuman treatment of UK woman in privately-run prison

Dennis Moore
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Nadine Wright, a 37-year-old from Peterborough, was a remand prisoner when she was left alone in a prison cell in November after she suffered a miscarriage. It is alleged that, with the dead foetus on the floor, she was then told to clean up the blood in the cell.

She was on remand because she stole food from a supermarket worth just £13.94. The appalling treatment meted out to Wright would need a modern-day Charles Dickens to adequately depict.

HMP Peterborough is a privately run prison, operated by Sodexo Justice Services (SJS). Wright's ordeal is understood to have occurred less than a day after she was taken into custody there on November 23 last year.

She had informed health care workers in the prison of her miscarriage. She claims she was not given any assistance, or pain relief for three days. Wright was said to be deeply traumatised by what had happened to her.

Her barrister, Philip Gibbs, told Leicester Crown Court, "There was blood everywhere and she was made to clean it up. The baby was not removed from the cell. It was quite appalling. It was very traumatic. She only received health care three days later, after the governor intervened."

Wright claims this was the case, even though a nurse was there and watched when she miscarried.

The incident only came to light when Wright appeared for sentencing for breach of two court orders in place following previous offences for shoplifting and failing to attend appointments with the probation service. After being found guilty, she was sentenced to 10 months in prison.

Gibbs said Wright's legal representatives would be investigating her alleged mistreatment in prison.

Wright had stolen the food out of desperation, because she had not received the welfare benefits she

was entitled to.

She was a vulnerable person, who had a history of suffering from mental health problems and had been battling long term heroin addiction since her early teens. She lived a chaotic lifestyle, and was not able to cope. She had lost her mother just two months previously and she was clearly grieving.

SJS, the company operating the Peterborough facility, is one of the commercial arms of the Sodexo group. The French headquartered Sodexo is a large multinational corporation, operating many hugely profitable commercial interests. In 2011 it reported revenues of €16.04 billion and profits of €9,451 million.

SJS runs 120 prison facilities across the globe, including five prisons in the UK. SJS was heavily criticised last year for the mistreatment of a female prisoner in HMP Bronzefield, a woman's prison in Ashford in England. This came to light following an unannounced visit that took place in August 2013 by the chief inspector of prisons.

During the inspection, they found an unnamed female prisoner who had been kept in segregation in squalid conditions for five years.

Nick Hardwick carried out the report. He said, "We were dismayed that the woman who had already been in the segregation unit for three years in 2010 was still there in 2013. Her cell was unkempt and squalid and she seldom left it."

Hardwick went on to say that her prolonged detention in the segregation unit amounted to "cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment—and we use these words advisedly."

Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, described the case as "shocking" and said the woman's treatment "appears to amount to

torture."

The alleged treatment of Nadine Wright has to be understood in the context of the immense growth in social inequality in the UK and internationally. Such grisly events indicate how society is becoming ever more brutalised, as the gap between the mega-rich and the rest of the population widens.



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