

Dr Philippa Tomczak

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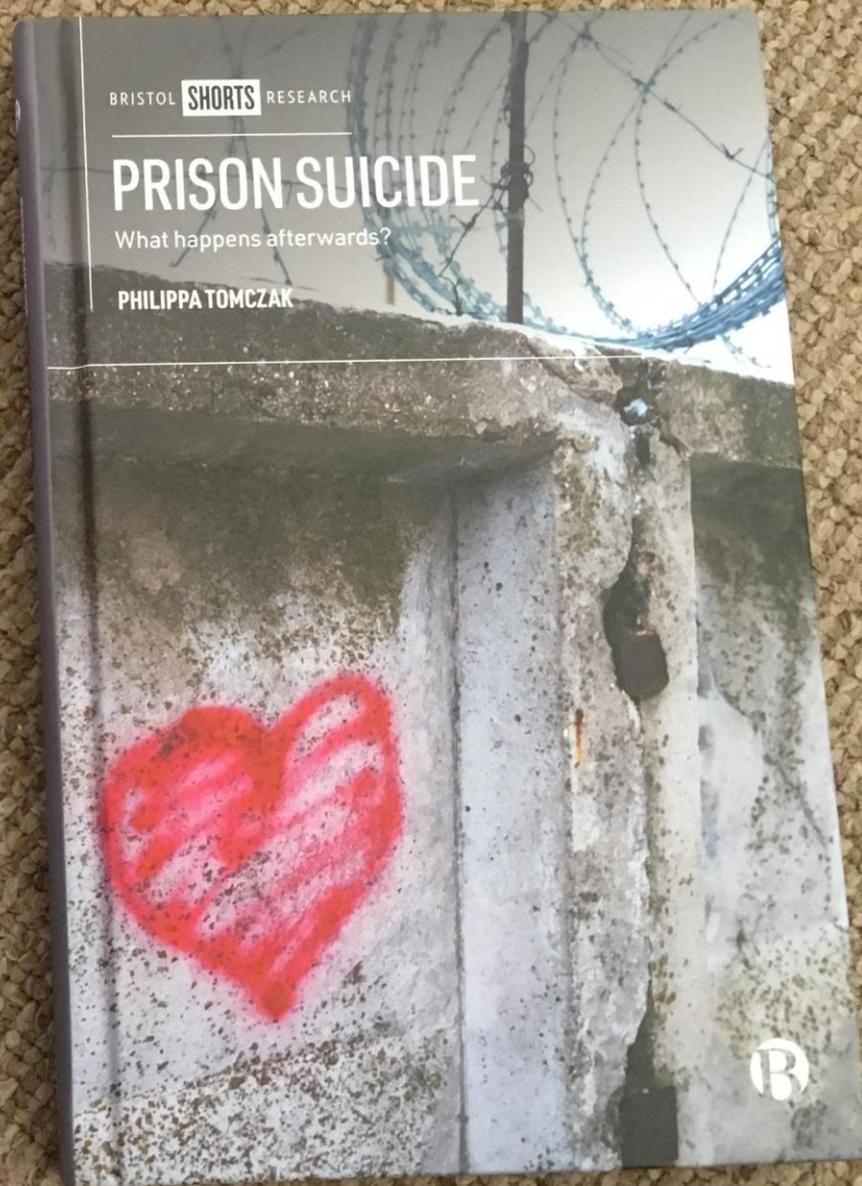
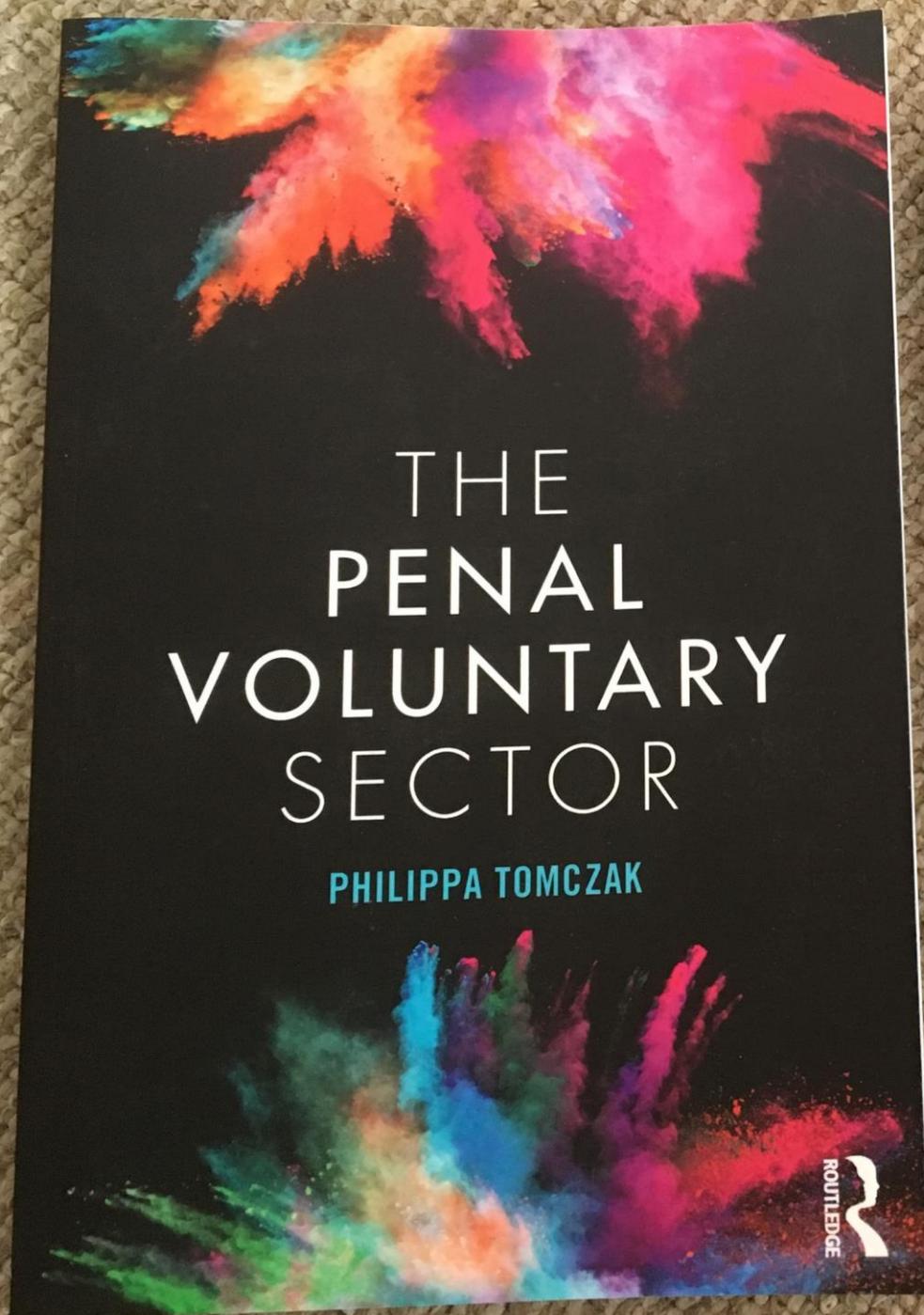
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International guidance: 1

European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment visited the UK from 30 March to 12 April 2016

Foregrounded its warning to the MoJ that:

'unless determined action is taken to significantly reduce the current prison population, the regime improvements envisaged by the authorities' reform agenda will remain unattainable [...] Over the last 25 years, the prison population has nearly doubled, and almost all adult prisons now operate at or near full operational capacity and well above their certified normal capacity'

(Council of Europe, 2017: 8)

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Let's try the UN

Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)

UK has a proud status as *“one of the early proponents of a treaty that aimed to prevent ill treatment in detention, and was actively involved in the drafting process. It was one of the first countries to notify the United Nations of the designation of its NPM. The UK government currently puts torture prevention as a priority of its foreign policy and actively encourages other states to ratify and implement OPCAT”*.

<https://www.nationalpreventivemechanism.org.uk/opcat/opcat/>

International guidance: 2

United Nations Committee Against Torture fifth periodic report on the UK (2013):

“concerns about the steady increase in the prison population throughout the past decade and the problem of overcrowding and its impact on the suicide rate, cases of self-injury, prisoner violence and access to recreational activities [...] deficiencies in access to appropriate mental health care and treatment”

“The Committee urges the State party to strengthen its efforts and set concrete targets to reduce the high level of imprisonment and overcrowding in places of detention, in particular through the wider use of non-custodial measures as an alternative to imprisonment, in the light of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures. [...] The Committee also recommends that the State party step up efforts to prevent violence and self-harm in places of detention”.

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT/C/GBR/CO/5&Lang=En

'Neoliberal' punishment

Highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe, prison population doubled over the last decade against static/ falling crime rates

Key drivers of the neoliberal penal surge are “welfare revamped as workfare and the prison stripped of its rehabilitative pretension” (Wacquant, 2010: 199)

These drivers “invisibilize problem populations—by forcing them off the public aid rolls [...] and holding them under lock”, until eventually pushing them into the peripheries of the **secondary** labour market (Wacquant, 2010: 199)

Part of the systematic devaluation of the poor

Employment as a red herring

“Housing is the lynchpin that holds the reintegration process together. Without a stable residence continuity in substance abuse and mental health treatment is compromised. Employment is often contingent upon a fixed living arrangement. And, in the end, a polity that does not concern itself with the housing needs of returning prisoners finds that it has done so at the expense of its own public safety”.

Bradley, K. H., Oliver, R. B., Richardson, N. C., & Slayter, E. M. (2001) No place like home: Housing and the ex-prisoner. *Issue brief*. Boston, MA: Community Resources for Justice.

The penal voluntary sector

Can do great things in (distinctively)
supporting criminalised individuals

Can't create resources on its own

Women in Prison (and men...)

Ambition: to halve the women's prison population by 2020.

“Women in prison are some of the most disadvantaged individuals in our society, often having experience of poverty, addiction, mental ill-health, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual exploitation – all of which are the root causes of offending. Prisons do not address these root causes and in many cases make circumstances significantly worse. [...] Building homes and community support services will reduce the prison population, building new prisons will not.”

<http://www.womeninprison.org.uk/perch/resources/files/2020%20Supporters%20Briefing.pdf>

