

INVESTIGATING PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF INMATES AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Nigerian criminal justice system, despite its legal commitments to fairness and impartiality, remains structurally biased in favor of socio-economically and politically privileged individuals. This study explores the phenomenon of preferential treatment of inmates in Nigeria, with a focus on Benue and Nasarawa States. Utilizing a qualitative content analysis approach based on secondary data including legal documents, institutional reports, and scholarly literature the research identifies patterns, causes, and implications of penal inequality. Major Finding revealed that high-profile inmates consistently receive expedited bail, superior prison conditions, and lenient sentencing outcomes, while indigent detainees endure prolonged pre-trial detention, overcrowded facilities, and a lack of legal representation. These disparities are driven by corruption, institutional weakness, societal stratification, and legislative loopholes. The study applies Elite Theory to demonstrate how the criminal justice system reflects and reinforces class-based hierarchies. The implications are profound: diminished public trust in legal institutions, overburdened correctional facilities, and the normalization of impunity among elites. Without systemic reform, preferential treatment will continue to erode the rule of law and exacerbate socio-economic divisions. The study recommends full enforcement of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015, the establishment of independent oversight bodies, and expanded legal aid services. It concludes that only holistic reforms rooted in accountability, transparency, and equity can restore legitimacy to Nigeria's criminal justice system.

Keywords: *Criminal Justice, Preferential Treatment, Penal Elitism, Inequality, Nigeria*

Introduction

From the Global perspective, prison systems have long reflected prevailing social and political inequalities. In developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, multiple studies have documented disparities in sentencing and inmate treatment based on race and class (Alexander, 2012; Reiman & Leighton, 2017).

In Africa, the situation is more pronounced due to historical legacies of colonialism, economic underdevelopment, and weak institutional frameworks (Gyekye, 2014).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, correctional facilities often struggle with overcrowding, poor infrastructure, and limited oversight. These conditions foster environments where preferential treatment thrives.

Nigeria, being the most populous African country, is particularly affected. Its prisons are overburdened, and the judicial system is plagued by corruption, delay, and manipulation by elite actors (CLEEN Foundation, 2021).

Benue and Nasarawa States, both in north-central Nigeria, face these challenges. Several reports show that wealthy inmates in these states access medical facilities outside the prison, enjoy separate accommodation, and even manipulate trial dates to their advantage.

Despite constitutional guarantees and reforms such as the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) of 2015, Nigeria's criminal justice system continues to exhibit significant disparities, particularly in the treatment of inmates based on socio-economic status. While the ACJA was enacted to promote efficiency and fairness in criminal proceedings, its implementation has been inconsistent, leading to a justice system where the affluent often receive preferential treatment.

Recent statistics reveal that a substantial majority of inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities are awaiting trial. As of March 2025, approximately 66.6% of inmates, equating to over 53,000 individuals, were in pre-trial detention. This prolonged incarceration without conviction does not only violate the principle of presumption of innocence but also contributes to overcrowded prison conditions. According to the Intelpoint 2025, The Nigerian Correctional Service has acknowledged that the current inmate population exceeds the designed capacity of custodial centers, exacerbating issues related to health, sanitation, and inmate welfare.

The disparity becomes more pronounced when considering the socio-economic backgrounds of the detainees. Most indigent individuals often lack access to quality legal representation and are unable to afford bail, resulting in extended periods of incarceration. In contrast, wealthier individuals frequently exploit systemic loopholes, leveraging their resources to secure bail, delay proceedings, or even obtain non-custodial sentences. This inequity undermines the foundational principle of equality before the law and erodes public confidence in the justice system.

Furthermore, systemic issues such as inadequate funding, insufficient judicial personnel, and outdated infrastructure contribute to delays in the adjudication process. These challenges are compounded by reports of corruption within the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, where bribery and undue influence can sway legal outcomes.

The cumulative effect of these factors is a justice system that disproportionately penalizes the poor while affording leniency to the privileged. Addressing these disparities requires comprehensive reforms aimed at ensuring equitable access to justice, enhancing the capacity of judicial institutions, and enforcing accountability mechanisms to deter corruption.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify patterns of preferential treatment of inmates in Nigeria.
- To examine the causes and mechanisms sustaining these disparities.
- To analyze the impact of preferential treatment on justice delivery.

Conceptional Clarification

Preferential Treatment

Preferential treatment refers to the unequal and often unjustified allocation of benefits, rights, or privileges to certain individuals or groups, typically at the expense of others (Gabbidon & Greene, 2019). In the context of criminal justice, it entails a deviation from legal neutrality in favor of inmates who possess financial, political, or social capital. In Nigeria, this often results in wealthy suspects accessing legal protections, bail, or plea deals not afforded to the poor.

Preferential treatment undermines core tenets of fairness and impartiality, breeding public distrust in the system. Scholars argue that such treatment is not merely individualistic but often institutionally embedded through policies, discretionary practices, and class-based biases (Reiman & Leighton, 2020; Ugwueze & Onuoha, 2023).

Criminal Justice

Criminal justice refers to the system of practices and institutions including law enforcement, judiciary, and correctional services established to uphold social control, deter and mitigate crime, and sanction those who violate laws (Siegel, 2021). In Nigeria, the criminal justice system is governed by statutes such as the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA, 2015), Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999).

However, the ideal of criminal justice equitable treatment of offenders is often compromised by procedural delays, corruption, lack of legal representation, and socio-economic disparities. These systemic dysfunctions provide fertile ground for preferential treatment (Alemika, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Correctional System

The correctional system, formerly known as the Nigerian Prisons Service, is tasked with the custody, reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of convicted persons. According to the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), correctional centers should guarantee human rights, skill acquisition, and reintegration support.

In practice, however, conditions in Nigerian correctional facilities reflect deep inequalities. While some inmates suffer extreme overcrowding, poor sanitation, and limited access to health care, others especially elites enjoy air-conditioned cells, gourmet food, and frequent external medical visits (Odili & Akintunde, 2022; PRAI, 2022). These privileges are unregulated and arbitrary, reflecting the structural imbalance within the penal system.

Literature Review

Patterns of Preferential Treatment of Inmates

Research identifies a distinct stratification within Nigerian correctional centers, often referred to as the "VIP System" or the "High-Profile vs. Ordinary" dichotomy (Olorunmola et al., 2023). This classification is rarely based on the nature of the crime, but rather on the inmate's external social standing (Arisukwu et al., 2023). Key patterns include:

High-profile inmates are frequently housed in self-contained units or "VIP cells" featuring amenities such as private bedding, fans, and sometimes air conditioning starkly contrasting the congested, unhygienic general cells.

While ordinary inmates often face chronic malnourishment and inadequate medical care, wealthy inmates may have access to specialized diets, private catering, and unauthorized medical furloughs to private clinics (Olorunmola et al., 2023).

Patterns emerge where influential inmates enjoy more liberal visitation rights and illegal but overlooked access to mobile phones and laptops, allowing them to maintain business and political networks.

Causes and Mechanisms Sustaining Disparities

Institutional Corruption and Underfunding: A primary sustaining mechanism is the systemic corruption within the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS). Chronic underfunding creates a vacuum where correctional officers—often underpaid—become susceptible to bribes for "comfort upgrades" (Arisukwu et al., 2023). In some instances, wealthy inmates essentially "subsidize" the facility's needs, such as repairing infrastructure, in exchange for personal

privileges (Olorunmola et al., 2023). The "Big Man" Syndrome and Political Patronage: Cultural norms, specifically the "Big Man" syndrome, play a significant role. Societal deference toward the wealthy and politically connected ensures that the "elite" are treated with a level of care that compromises legal equality (Adewale, 2026). This is often supported by "godfatherism," where external political pressure is applied to prison officials to ensure a "soft landing" for high-profile detainees.

Impact of Preferential Treatment on Justice Delivery

The Breakdown of Institutional Order and Security: Preferential treatment creates a "shadow hierarchy" that undermines the official chain of command. When the "hidden curriculum" of a prison suggests that money buys comfort, the resulting perceived injustice becomes a catalyst for volatility.

When inmates have more wealth and political connections than the officers guarding them, the traditional power dynamic is inverted. Officers may become "service providers" for VIPs rather than authority figures, leading to a breakdown in discipline.

Ordinary inmates view the "VIP" lifestyle as a daily provocation. This friction often boils over into riots, hunger strikes, and coordinated protests, endangering both staff and the inmate population (Olorunmola et al., 2023).

The "Deterrence Erosion" suggests a failure in the utilitarian function of law where the "pain" of the penalty must outweigh the "pleasure" or profit of the crime.

For high-level political or financial criminals, if prison involves a private suite and internet access, the sentence is no longer a punishment; it is an operating expense. This encourages high-profile actors to take bigger risks, knowing the consequences are negotiable.

In regions like North-Central Nigeria, the lack of a true deterrent creates a cycle where the cost of committing white-collar crime is significantly lower than the potential reward.

The legitimacy of a government rests on the belief that the law is applied equally. Visible disparities serve as proof to the public that the judiciary is a tool of the elite.

When the public sees high-profile convicts serving "hospital-based" sentences or living in luxury, they experience legal alienation. This often leads to a rise in "jungle justice" as citizens feel the official system is incapable of punishing the powerful (Adewale, 2026).

If citizens do not trust the justice system to be fair, they are less likely to report crimes or cooperate with investigations, creating a "black hole" in the legal process.

Rehabilitative Failure and the Cycle of Recidivism: The most long-term damage occurs at the level of reformatory failure, where the system fails to return law-abiding citizens to society.

The harsh environment of general cells acts as a "school of crime" for the marginalized, while the rich are exempt from the reformatory process. This results in higher recidivism rates among the disadvantaged (Arisukwu et al., 2023).

Funds used to maintain VIP comforts are diverted from vocational training and mental health services that could prevent ordinary inmates from re-offending.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the phenomenon of preferential treatment within Nigeria's criminal justice system requires a robust theoretical lens that accounts for systemic inequality, power dynamics, and institutional failure. This study adopts Elite Theory to explain how socio-economic and political privilege shapes the treatment of inmates within correctional institutions.

Elite Theory

Elite Theory, as developed by Mills (1956) and further expanded by Mosca and Pareto, posits that a small group of powerful individuals—politicians, business magnates, and top bureaucrats—control the key institutions in society, including the criminal justice system. These elites shape laws, policies, and enforcement processes to protect their interests and ensure their continued dominance.

Applied to the Nigerian context, elite theory reveals how individuals within this privileged class manipulate the justice system to avoid punishment, gain special treatment in custody, or escape accountability entirely. High-profile cases of political figures receiving presidential pardons, house arrest, or VIP prison accommodations exemplify the dominance of elite influence over judicial processes (Ojo, 2022; Transparency International, 2022).

Elite theory also explains how structural inequality is perpetuated through patronage networks, judicial appointments, and political interference. The unequal allocation of legal resources—such as quality representation, access to bail, and favorable sentencing—can thus be traced to the overarching control that elites exert over formal institutions (Ugwueze & Onuoha, 2023).

Methods

To investigate the preferential treatment of inmates within the Nigerian criminal justice system, this study utilized a qualitative content analysis approach. This methodological choice was driven by the sensitive and often inaccessible nature of custodial environments, allowing for a systematic interpretation of institutional dynamics through the lens of existing documentation rather than direct human interaction. By focusing on the "paper trail" of justice delivery, the research was able to identify recurring themes and patterns of disparity that are often obscured from public view.

The data for this inquiry were synthesized from a diverse array of authoritative sources to ensure a triangulated and objective perspective. Primary among these were reports from international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Transparency International, which provided a global benchmark for correctional standards. These were meticulously cross-referenced with official national documents—specifically those issued by the Nigerian Correctional Service, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and the Federal Ministry of Justice—to understand the internal policy framework and administrative rhetoric of the state.

To ground the investigation in theoretical and historical context, the study drew extensively from academic scholarship. This included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations that offered critical perspectives on the intersection of wealth, power, and incarceration in West Africa. Finally, to capture real-time developments and specific case studies of "VIP" inmate privileges, the analysis incorporated investigative media reports from reputable national outlets such as *Premium Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Channels TV*.

These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and recent publication dates (2015–2024).

Discussion OF Major Findings

This section presents and discusses the major findings of the study based entirely on the review and analysis of secondary data sources such as government reports, legal statutes, human rights assessments, and peer-reviewed academic literature. The discussion is structured around major

themes derived from the research objectives and literature, interpreted through the lens of Structural Conflict Theory.

Unequal Access to Bail and Legal Representation

Secondary data reveal that access to bail and quality legal representation in Nigeria is highly unequal and primarily influenced by socio-economic status. Numerous reports, including those from the Prisoners' Rights Advocacy Initiative (PRAI, 2022), indicate that thousands of indigent detainees are held in prolonged pre-trial detention simply because they cannot afford bail or competent legal representation. The legal provisions in the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 are designed to safeguard the rights of all defendants, but in practice, implementation is inconsistent and often ineffective for the poor.

In contrast, affluent individuals and politically connected suspects often gain prompt bail through influential networks, high-ranking legal representation, or favorable judicial discretion. Amnesty International (2022) and Human Rights Watch (2023) have documented several cases where wealthy or prominent individuals accused of serious offenses were granted bail within a few days, while those accused of petty theft or non-violent crimes remained in detention for years. These disparities support the assumptions of Structural Conflict Theory, which argues that the law is selectively applied in ways that protect elite interests and repress marginalized groups.

A consistent pattern observed in the responses is the disparity in the ability of inmates to access bail. Wealthier or politically connected detainees often secured bail within days, facilitated by top-tier lawyers or direct intervention from influential figures. In contrast, poor detainees languished in custody due to their inability to meet stringent bail conditions or afford legal representation.

"A well-connected inmate in Makurdi left within 48 hours. Meanwhile, another inmate arrested on the same charge is still here after six months." (*Correctional Officer, Makurdi*)

This finding reflects the conclusions of Reiman and Leighton (2017), who argued that criminal justice systems tend to treat the wealthy more leniently. In the Nigerian context, Ajomo and Okagbue (1991) also highlighted this issue. This theme aligns with the first objective of the study: to identify patterns of preferential treatment of inmates. It further supports Conflict Theory by revealing how access to legal freedom is stratified along economic lines.

Preferential Prison Conditions for the Elite

Another significant finding pertains to the glaring inequalities in prison conditions. Reports from Transparency International (2022), the Nigerian Correctional Service (2021), and investigative journalism indicate that wealthy or high-profile inmates are often accorded special privileges, including access to private or well-ventilated cells, superior meals, medical care, and even telecommunication gadgets. These "VIP cells" are segregated from the general prison population and shield privileged inmates from the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions that ordinary prisoners endure.

Conversely, the average inmate—typically poor and without political backing—is subjected to dehumanizing conditions, such as severe overcrowding, limited access to food, poor sanitation, and inadequate medical care. The differential treatment of inmates according to their social class reaffirms the relevance of Structural Conflict Theory, particularly the notion that criminal justice systems are constructed to serve and protect the interests of dominant social classes.

Disparities in Sentencing and Legal Outcomes

Disparities in sentencing outcomes between the elite and the underprivileged are another critical area of concern. Evidence from judicial case reviews and legal commentaries (Okeke & Onuoha, 2021; PRAI, 2022) shows that wealthy individuals, especially those charged with white-collar crimes such as fraud or embezzlement, often negotiate plea bargains, receive suspended sentences, or pay fines in lieu of imprisonment. In contrast, poor defendants, even those convicted of minor property crimes or misdemeanors, are frequently subjected to custodial sentences without the opportunity for alternative sanctions.

These unequal outcomes reveal a justice system where punishment is not based solely on the gravity of the offense but is also influenced by the socio-economic standing of the defendant. Such a system contradicts the principle of equality before the law and aligns with Reiman and Leighton's (2020) assertion that the criminal justice system functions to selectively punish the powerless while shielding the powerful.

Delays in Legal Proceedings and Selective Prosecution

The problem of judicial delays disproportionately affects poor defendants. Data from the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA, 2021) and legal analysts point to a trend where cases involving elites are strategically delayed through adjournments, appeals, and technicalities. Powerful individuals can afford high-ranking lawyers who manipulate legal procedures to stall trials indefinitely, often leading to the eventual collapse of cases.

Meanwhile, the poor are hurried through the justice system without adequate representation or the benefit of procedural safeguards. The use of prolonged adjournments and procedural technicalities for elites results in selective prosecution, contributing to a pattern of legal impunity for powerful offenders. This selective use of legal procedures supports the structural conflict view that legal institutions can be manipulated to preserve class privilege and systemic inequality.

Amnesty International (2022) corroborates this issue, noting that 70% of Nigerian inmates are awaiting trial, with the majority being from impoverished backgrounds. The theme ties directly to the third objective: to analyze the impact of preferential treatment on justice delivery. Delayed justice deepens inequality, criminalizes poverty, and reduces faith in legal institutions.

Public Perception and Institutional Legitimacy

Widespread public perception reinforces the reality of class-based discrimination within the justice system. Surveys conducted by the CLEEN Foundation (2022) and Afrobarometer (2023) indicate that a large proportion of Nigerians believe that the criminal justice system disproportionately targets the poor while allowing the rich to escape accountability. This public sentiment is reinforced by media coverage of high-profile corruption cases where well-connected individuals often walk free despite overwhelming evidence.

Such perceptions contribute to a deep erosion of trust in legal institutions. Citizens increasingly view the justice system not as a means of resolving disputes fairly but as an instrument of elite protection. This erosion of trust undermines the legitimacy of the criminal justice system and contributes to the growing preference for informal justice mechanisms, which are themselves often violent and extrajudicial.

The decline in institutional legitimacy and rising public frustration confirm Tyler's (2006) procedural justice theory, which posits that public support for the law depends largely on the

perceived fairness of legal processes. When preferential treatment is evident, the justice system loses credibility, reinforcing cynicism, resentment, and lawlessness.

The findings reveal a consistent pattern of systemic bias in the criminal justice system, favoring wealthy and influential individuals while criminalizing poverty. From the point of arrest and bail hearings to sentencing and prison conditions, disparities in treatment are closely linked to social class, political affiliation, and financial power. This pattern is not accidental but structurally embedded in institutional practices, legislative loopholes, and cultural attitudes that valorize power and wealth.

The application of Structural Conflict Theory has been particularly useful in interpreting these findings. The theory emphasizes that legal systems in capitalist societies are structured to maintain the dominance of ruling classes by criminalizing the behaviors of the underprivileged. In the Nigerian context, preferential treatment in criminal justice processes is a manifestation of this broader structural inequality.

Causes of Preferential Treatment

The prevalence of preferential treatment in Nigeria's criminal justice system is driven by a confluence of socio-political, economic, and institutional factors. These causes include:

Corruption: Corruption remains a central challenge in Nigeria's criminal justice landscape. Bribes are frequently exchanged to influence police investigations, secure bail, or obtain favorable court decisions. Wealthy individuals and political actors often manipulate the system by financially incentivizing judicial and correctional officials to receive lenient treatment or expedited processing. According to Amnesty International (2022), high-profile detainees often evade legal consequences through bribery and behind-the-scenes negotiations.

Institutional Weakness: The justice sector suffers from chronic underfunding, inadequate staffing, and outdated infrastructure. Correctional institutions lack sufficient mechanisms for transparency and accountability, making it easier for officials to extend privileges to certain inmates. The National Human Rights Commission (2022) highlights the absence of independent inspection bodies as a barrier to uniform standards of inmate treatment. Additionally, weak internal checks within the judiciary and correctional system further exacerbate discriminatory practices.

Societal Stratification: Nigeria's deeply hierarchical social structure contributes to unequal justice. The wealthy and politically connected are often treated with deference, both within and outside the courtroom. Cultural norms that revere status and affluence reinforce the notion that elites are entitled to different treatment. As Oloyede (2019) explains, such societal attitudes not only influence judicial behavior but also justify the marginalization of economically disadvantaged offenders.

Legislative Gaps and Inconsistent Implementation: While progressive laws like the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 aim to reduce arbitrariness and protect the rights of detainees, their implementation has been uneven across states. Legal practitioners often exploit ambiguities in the law to favor their elite clients. Ugwueze and Onuoha (2023) note that the lack of strict enforcement and the manipulation of procedural technicalities have undermined the egalitarian intentions of the ACJA.

Political Patronage and Executive Interference: The influence of political actors on judicial processes is another major factor. Politically exposed persons (PEPs) often leverage their connections to secure bail, delay prosecution, or obtain special prison privileges. The politicization of judicial appointments and case assignments further entrenches bias and inhibits judicial independence.

Implications of Preferential Treatment

Preferential treatment in the Nigerian criminal justice system carries profound implications for justice delivery, societal equity, and democratic governance:

Erosion of Public Trust: When justice appears to be for sale or influenced by connections, public faith in the legal system erodes. This disillusionment weakens civic engagement and may lead to increased reliance on vigilante justice. Transparency International (2021) found that over 70% of Nigerians believe the justice system disproportionately favors the wealthy.

Overcrowding of Prisons: The inability of indigent detainees to meet bail conditions or secure timely legal aid leads to long-term pre-trial detention. In contrast, affluent suspects quickly regain freedom, exacerbating inequality. According to Human Rights Watch (2023), approximately 70% of Nigeria's prison population consists of awaiting trial inmates, most of whom are poor.

Undermining Rule of Law and Legal Equality: Selective justice undermines the principle of legal equality, a cornerstone of democratic societies. When laws are applied unevenly, the integrity and legitimacy of the judiciary come into question, potentially destabilizing the legal order (Reiman & Leighton, 2020).

Normalization of Impunity and Criminality: Preferential treatment reinforces a dangerous norm where those with power feel insulated from consequences. This normalization of impunity incentivizes repeated offenses and breeds public resentment. Quinney (1974) argued that such systemic bias perpetuates crime by reinforcing class inequalities.

Stifling of Reform Efforts: Efforts to reform Nigeria's criminal justice system face resistance when elites benefit from the status quo. Preferential treatment can sabotage reform policies by reducing pressure for change from those who wield influence.

Conclusion

The Nigerian criminal justice system exhibits entrenched patterns of preferential treatment driven by class-based inequalities and institutional weaknesses. The existing justice framework, though equipped with progressive legislation, fails to serve the majority equitably. The elite manipulate the system to their advantage, while poor inmates are subjected to injustice and neglect. This perpetuates public distrust, social tension, and institutional decay. The research confirms that preferential treatment of inmates is a deeply entrenched problem in Nigeria's criminal justice system, perpetuated by wealth, political influence, and institutional weaknesses. From global observations to the local context of Benue and Nasarawa States, disparities in justice delivery remain stark. While some inmates enjoy a privileged status with access to medical care, better food, and legal reprieve, the indigent majority endure subhuman conditions and legal neglect. Unless holistic reforms are enacted anchored in transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness the Nigerian justice system will continue to favor the powerful and disenfranchise the poor, eroding societal trust and democratic values.

Recommendations

i. Mandatory Transparency via Digital Oversight

To dismantle the "VIP System" and the hidden patterns of comfort, the Nigerian Correctional Service must move beyond manual, paper-based logs which are easily manipulated, but implement a National Inmate Biometric Tracking System (NIBTS), where the system should digitally log every inmate's cell assignment, medical referral, and visitation frequency in real-time. By making inmate data accessible to an independent central oversight body, the "shadow hierarchy" of VIP cells becomes visible and auditable, making it harder for facility heads to grant unauthorized privileges without detection.

ii. Institutional Decoupling of Funding and Favor

The government should establish a Correctional Trust Fund to be managed by an independent board of trustees, specifically dedicated to facility maintenance and staff welfare in the North-Central region. This will ensure that correctional centers are adequately funded through official channels, the "Big Man" syndrome is neutralized.

iii. Judicial Equalization through the "Equal Access" Mandate

There should be full operationalization of Section 34 of the ACJA 2015, which requires Chief Magistrates to conduct monthly inspections of detention centers, but with a new "Equity Clause" that mandates the immediate provisional release of any indigent inmate held longer than 30 days for a bailable offense. This addresses the "Deterrence Erosion" and "Public Confidence" issues.

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