Polity & Governance · GS - II

How can prison administration balance inmate safety, individual rights and institutional security? Examine.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 24/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Prison reforms, Article 21, custodial responsibility, inmate protection, security segregation, judicial oversight, human dignity

Model Answer

Introduction

Prisons are institutions of lawful custody, not spaces beyond constitutional protection. Their administration must ensure institutional security while safeguarding the life, dignity and legal rights of inmates.

Balancing Security and Rights

1. **Protection of life:** Article 21 obligates prison authorities to take reasonable measures against violence, intimidation and threats to inmates.
2. **Risk-based segregation:** Separating prisoners facing credible threats can prevent assaults and inter-gang violence, provided the measure is proportionate and periodically reviewed.
3. **Humane treatment:** Security restrictions must not become arbitrary isolation, degrading treatment or punishment without due process.

4. **Judicial oversight:** Courts can examine custodial conditions, order protective measures and address violations of prisoners' constitutional rights.
5. **Professional prison management:** Staff training, intelligence gathering, grievance mechanisms and transparent incident reporting strengthen institutional safety.

Required Reforms

1. Establish standardised protocols for assessing threats and deciding protective segregation.
2. Ensure access to legal counsel, healthcare, communication and regular review of restrictive measures.
3. Strengthen independent inspections and accountability mechanisms.
4. Improve prison infrastructure, staffing and technology while preventing misuse of surveillance.

Conclusion

Effective prison governance requires security measures that are lawful, proportionate and humane. Protecting inmates from violence while preserving their constitutional dignity is essential to a credible criminal justice system.

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