

Honduran Prison Fire Sparks Push for Reform

More than 350 inmates on Wednesday suffocated or burned to death after a prison caught fire in a Central America country.

The **Honduran prison fire** began late Tuesday night and blazed into Wednesday morning. Firefighters were unable to get to many prisoners, noting that they couldn't find the keys to the cells or anyone who had them. The cause of the fire has been narrowed down to either a prison riot or faulty electrical wires.

However it started, Cynthia Williams with **Crossroad Bible Institute** says prison conditions were undoubtedly a factor in the number of lives lost.

"In these developing countries, prisons are definitely not kept up; the structures themselves are not very good," she explains. "They're designed to keep prisoners in because they're desperate to not have them escape. So there are no contingency plans for these kinds of emergencies."

CBI ministers to inmates all across the globe. They don't yet have an outreach in Honduras, but they are in neighboring countries, including Nicaragua and Guatemala, where prisons have similar conditions.

Williams was recently in Guatemala. One prison she visited there was old and overcrowded, especially as a result of gang violence within the country. A series of earthquakes had rocked the prison just before Williams arrived. Apart from structural damage, the prisoners were more unstable since they were not able to leave their cells.

"They're so afraid that the prisoners will escape that they really don't want to let them out, and may not be prepared to

handle this kind of situation,” explains Williams.

The overcrowding, damage and poor conditions of this **Guatemalan prison** paint a standard picture of prisons across Central America.

The conditions of all Central American prisons will not change overnight, but CBI is dedicated to bringing these inmates hope. Yesterday’s blaze was truly a tragedy for those who never had the opportunity to know Christ.

“They have gone to an eternity. Hopefully some heard about Christ.” Williams adds, “Most people don’t even think about prisoners, but this is such a vital area of ministry.”