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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 82/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - LEBANON, ARMENIA, USA

**PLEASE NOTE:** A report on Kosovo: "Police violence against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province", AI Index: EUR 70/06/94, was accidentally sent out to international correspondents in Yugoslavia by the research team. The document is not yet with sections and will be sent in the Weekly Mailing of 27 April. If you get media queries on this report, or need the report quickly, please contact Joanna Duchesne, Tel: +44 71 413 5683.

**PLEASE NOTE: CORRECTION - SEE NEWS SERVICE ITEM ON CYPRUS SENT OUT IN NEWS SERVICE 81/94 -** The first line should read "AI yesterday wrote to President Glafcos Clerides of Cyprus".

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Hong Kong - 0600 hrs gmt, 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICES 71/94 AND 36/94

Trade Unionists - 29 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

**\*\*Burundi - 17 May\*\*** - PLEASE NOTE: Change of launch date to 17 May for start of Burundi Week. SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94

**\*\*China - 1 June\*\***

Document and news release for fifth anniversary of Tiananmen Square Massacre - prisoners of conscience still detained.

**\*\* Pakistan - 29 June\*\*** - Document and News release on the increase of death sentences for blasphemy. We will let you know when the report is ready to be sent out.

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Israel & OT CAT - 22 April - SEE NEWS SERVICES 79/94 AND 53/94

**\*\*China - 5 May\*\***

Document and news service item with new figures on death penalty in China. Document is being sent in the Weekly Mailing of 27 April. News service item should also be sent out then.

## FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 7 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

AI INDEX: MDE 18/WU 02/94  
22 APRIL 1994

**LEBANON: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPEALS AGAINST FIRST EXECUTION FOR ELEVEN YEARS**

Amnesty International urgently appeals to the Lebanese authorities to stop the execution of Bassam Salah al-Muslah scheduled for tomorrow in the Palace of Justice in Sidon -- which would be the first judicial execution to be carried out in Lebanon since 1983.

"We are deeply disappointed by this move toward resumption of executions despite our repeated calls for clemency for Bassam al-Muslah since he was first sentenced to death," said Amnesty International.

The organization opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the fundamental right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Bassam Salah al-Muslah was convicted on 6 April 1993 of the rape and murder of a seven-year-old girl in January 1993. The sentence was confirmed by the Criminal Court of Cassation on 31 March 1994.

Amnesty International also fears for the lives of three other men who have been sentenced to death this month. 'Abd al-Karim Hujayj and Muhammad Za'tar, both members of the Syrian armed forces, were convicted of the 1992 murder of two brothers, Ghassan and Jall Antonios. A third man was convicted *in absentia* and is currently in Belgium, which has apparently refused to extradite him. In a separate case, Shaker al-Buraydi was convicted of killing three policemen during a drugs raid on his house in March 1994.

They were tried by the Court of Justice, Lebanon's highest court. There is apparently no right of appeal against verdicts of this court and reports suggest these cases will come before President Elias Hrawi for approval shortly. Amnesty International is appealing for clemency in these and any other future cases.

Lebanon has recently expanded death penalty legislation. A law passed in March 1994 made the death penalty mandatory for intentional murder and introduced the death penalty in cases of political murder.

Amnesty International has expressed its regret to Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri about this expansion, and has urged the review of all legislation providing for the death penalty in order to reduce the number of capital offenses, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

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AI INDEX: EUR 54/WU 01/94  
22 APRIL 1994

**ARMENIA - AZERBAYDZHANI PRISONERS OF WAR KILLED IN "EXECUTION-TYPE SHOOTINGS"**

Forensic evidence released this month suggests that six Azerbaydzhani prisoners of war held in Armenia were victims of "execution-type shootings", according to a forensic expert.

Following an announcement, in February, by the Armenian Foreign Ministry that eight Azerbaydzhani prisoners of war had been shot while attempting to escape, ten bodies were transferred from Armenia to Azerbaydzhani in March. Professor Derrick Pounder, head of the Department of Forensic Medicine at the University of Dundee, United Kingdom, began post-mortem examinations on the bodies at the beginning of April. The bodies had also undergone previous examinations by both the Armenians and the Azeris.

He found that six of the men - Rustam Ramazan ogly Agev, Elehan Guseyn ogly Akhmedov, Elman Mamed ogly Akhmedov, Kurchat Kiyaz ogly Mamedov, Eldar Chakhbaba ogly Mamedov and Faig Gabil ogly Guliyev - had been killed by a single gunshot wound to the head. He also found that in three of the six cases the muzzle of the gun had been in contact with the head at the time the shot was fired. It was not possible to determine the range at which the shot had been fired in the other three cases owing to earlier removal of physical evidence.

Professor Pounder concluded that the pattern of gunshot wounds was not consistent with allegations that the six men had been shot while attempting to escape, and said that the common pattern of the wounds was "strongly suggestive of execution-type shootings".

Amnesty International is urging the Armenian authorities to conduct a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the deaths of these six men, to make the findings public, and to bring to justice any perpetrators of execution-style killings, within the bounds of international law.

The human rights organization is also urging the Armenian authorities to investigate the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the remaining four men whose bodies were returned, in order to determine if criminal proceedings are necessary in their cases also.

Professor Pounder found that one of these had wounds to the throat in a pattern of injury consistent with suicide, one died of a single gunshot wound to the chest, and in two instances the cause of death could not be determined.

Amnesty International is also seeking clarification from the Azerbaydzhani authorities over the deaths in custody of a number of ethnic Armenians. Six such prisoners held under sentence of death have died between June 1992 and April 1994: Yury Dzhangiryan, Sergey Grebenkov (who was half Armenian and half Russian), Arno Mkrtychyan, Grachik Petrosyan, Armen Avenesyan and Arkady Ayriyan. Officially Sergey Grebenkov committed suicide and the others died of various illnesses, but there have been allegations that beatings and medical neglect contributed to their deaths.

Thousands are said to have died in the fighting over Karabakh, an area in Azerbaydzhani populated mainly by ethnic Armenians. All parties to the conflict have condoned widespread hostage-taking, including of non-combatant civilians, and there have also been many allegations of ill-treatment in detention (see Azerbaydzhani: Hostages in the Karabakh conflict: civilians continue to pay the price, AI Index: EUR 55/08/93).

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**AI INDEX: AMR 51/WU 07/94  
22 APRIL 1994**

**MOVE TO EXTEND DEATH PENALTY IN USA**

**A new crime bill that would enlarge the scope of the federal death penalty to cover more than 60 crimes is soon expected to become law in the United States, according to Amnesty International.**

**The crimes included in the bill range from the murder of federal officials to non-homicidal offenses including the attempted assassination of the President and major drug-related crimes.**

**The bill was passed in an unprecedented move by the House of Representatives on 21 April. A similar measure was passed by the Senate in November 1993. A final version must now be agreed in a joint committee. President Bill Clinton, whose administration strongly supports the bill, is expected to sign it into law.**

**At present the death penalty is authorized under federal law only for murder during aircraft hijacking and drug-related homicides. There have been no executions under federal law since 1963.**

**"The move to increase the death penalty in federal cases is contrary to international standards which encourage states to reduce the use of the death penalty and not to extend it to crimes to which it does not currently apply", said Amnesty International.**

**The human rights organization already has grave concerns about the increase in state executions; the evidence of race discrimination in the application of the death penalty, and the inadequate legal representation of many capital defendants. An amendment which would allow defendants to challenge their death sentences on grounds of racial discrimination was included in the House bill but is not in the Senate's version. A further amendment to ensure adequate legal representation for capital defendants was dropped from both bills.**

**Racial bias is already evident in federal prosecutions for drug-related murders under the 1988 Anti-Drugs Abuse Act - the only federal law under which death sentences have been sought in recent years. Statistics released in March indicated that 89% of defendants for whom federal prosecutors had sought the death penalty in such cases were black or Hispanic even though 3/4 of federal drug trafficking defendants are white.**

**"An extension of the death penalty in federal law would be a grave setback to human rights and would place the US out of line with the world trend towards abolition", said Amnesty International.**

**More and more countries across the world have abolished the death penalty. Recent abolitionist countries include Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and the Gambia in Africa; the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland in Europe, and Cambodia and Hong Kong in Asia. By June 1993, 52 countries worldwide had abolished the death penalty for all offenses, and 15 for all but exceptional crimes. A further 19 countries, while retaining the death penalty in law, have not carried out any executions for at least 10 years.**

**In an open letter to President Clinton in January, Amnesty International outlined its concerns about the use of the death penalty in the USA and called for a Presidential Commission of Inquiry to look into all aspects of the use of the death penalty in that country.**

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