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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 94/93

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EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October (international)

Venezuela - 10 November (international, linked to EJEs & Disappearances)

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**EGYPT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED AT DELIBERATE AND ARBITRARY KILLINGS BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

Amnesty International is concerned at the growing number of civilians deliberately and arbitrarily killed by armed opposition groups in Egypt. Within the last month at least nine unarmed civilians have been murdered by armed men, alleged to be members of banned Islamic militant groups, including al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group). In several cases the victims appear to have been selected on account of their religion.

On 3 July 1993 a 29-year-old shopkeeper, 'Adel Anwar Abu al-'Izz, was shot dead by two armed men, reportedly members of a banned Islamic militant group, outside his shop in Hada'iq al-Qubba in Cairo.

On 15 July 1993 a 23-year-old Christian shopkeeper, Mohsen Maurice Yassa, was deliberately killed by two gunmen in Dayrut, southern Egypt. One day later, a 45-year-old grocery owner, 'Issa Mohammed Ahmed, was shot dead by a man who came to his store in Musha, in southern Egypt.

On 18 July four civilians were killed and five wounded in Cairo. A day later, according to press reports, al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya claimed responsibility for the killings and allegedly stated that "the missed target was the president of the Supreme Military Court".

A Christian doctor, Fawzi Bishri Mikhael, aged 40, was murdered by gunmen on 22 July on his way to his clinic at the Central Hospital in Manfalout, south of Cairo. On 5 August another Christian pharmacist, Philip al-Qummus Basilius, aged 36, was murdered by armed men in his pharmacy in Dayrut. In both cases there are fears that gunmen targeted them because of their religion.

Most of these killings are reported to have been committed by al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, whose main leaders are either in prison or in exile outside the country. Thousands of its members and sympathizers are detained in various prisons and detention centres throughout Egypt. Between April and early July 1993 14 members or sympathizers of different banned Islamic groups were executed, having been sentenced to death by military courts after unfair trials. Amnesty International has expressed concern to the government of Egypt about torture, the use of administrative detention of political prisoners, about unfair trials and about the use of the death penalty which Amnesty International condemns in all cases.

Amnesty International also condemns all deliberate and arbitrary killings by armed opposition groups and calls for an immediate halt to such killings. The organization believes that such killings are human rights abuses which should not be tolerated, whether carried out by governments or by those who aspire to governmental powers. They are contrary to international humanitarian standards which apply both to governments and armed opposition groups.

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**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING, GATHERED IN BOSTON, CALLS FOR A HALT TO IMPENDING EXECUTIONS IN THE USA**

Boston -- Amnesty International today stepped up its calls for the federal and state governments in the United States to stop the escalating number of executions in the country -- and called for clemency to be granted to eight men set to be poisoned to death by the state of Texas in the next four weeks.

"It is disturbing for Amnesty International activists to see blatant human rights violations taking place in the very country where we are meeting to talk about protecting those rights," Pierre Sané, Amnesty International Secretary General, said today (Monday, August 9).

This is the first time that Amnesty International's worldwide governing body -- the International Council -- is meeting in the USA. The Council passed a resolution condemning continuing executions in the USA, stating that "the death penalty remains the most basic violation of human rights, robbing people of their fundamental right to life. It has no place in any society, including the United States which claims moral and ethical leadership within the community of nations."

"The US government's claims to be leading the way in building a new world order are mocked by the way prisoners are being executed with increasing frequency and decreasing mercy," Mr. Sané added.

Twenty-three men have already been put to death this year in nine states, and eight more in Texas alone are due to die in the next four weeks. At this rate, 1992's appalling record number of 31 executions in one year will be surpassed before the end of this year. Some 2,700 prisoners are currently on death row in the USA.

The International Council in particular called for clemency in the case of David Holland, who is scheduled to die on August 12 -- while the ICM is meeting in the United States -- and for Gary Graham, whose execution is scheduled for August 17. They are among the 376 prisoners under sentence of death in Texas, the highest number of any state. There have been 63 executions in Texas since 1982, more than double the number in any other state.

The case of Gary Graham highlights the USA's increasing isolation on the death penalty, where it finds itself lined up with governments like those in China, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

At the time the murder took place, Gary Graham was only 17, making him one of the dozens of juvenile offenders on death row. The USA stands almost alone in allowing the execution of juvenile offenders -- the only other countries that do so are Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan. As far as Amnesty International knows, more juvenile offenders are under sentence of death in the USA than in any other country.

There are also strong reasons to believe that Graham did not commit the crime, but he has not been given an opportunity to present the additional evidence indicating his innocence because of procedural obstacles in US law that would allow the execution of even an innocent man if evidence is acquired too late.

Graham, like nearly half of all people on death row, is an African American; there is clear evidence, recognized even by the authorities themselves, that there is racial discrimination in the judicial system when people are sentenced to death.

An international panel of jurists at a Commission of Inquiry into the death penalty in the USA, convened last week in conjunction with the International Council Meeting, also urged the abolition of the death penalty in the United States.