

# The Wire

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## USA executes mentally ill

*“Today, at 6pm, the State of Florida is scheduled to kill my brother, Thomas Provenzano, despite clear evidence that he is mentally ill... I have to wonder: Where is the justice in killing a sick human being?”*

Sister of death row inmate, June 2000

By the end of 2005, more than 1,000 men and women had been put to death in the USA since executions resumed in 1977. At least one in 10 of them were suffering from mental illness.

In a report released in January, AI listed the stories of a hundred people who had been executed in the USA since 1977 despite clear evidence that they were mentally ill. People like Johnny Garrett, executed in 1992 for a murder committed when he was 17. Like many on the list, Johnny Garrett was severely physically and sexually abused as a child, leaving him brain damaged and chronically psychotic. He was described by a psychiatrist as “one of the most psychiatrically impaired inmates” she had ever examined, and by a psychologist as having “one of the most virulent histories of abuse and neglect... encountered in over 28 years of practice.”

Many of the 100 suffered hallucinations or delusions as a result of their mental illness, some had serious brain damage. Yet all were judged mentally competent and able to understand the charges against them – a necessary prerequisite for a death sentence.

The judge who found Thomas Provenzano competent for execution found “clear and convincing evidence that Provenzano has a delusional belief that the real reason he is being executed is because he is Jesus Christ.” He said that his ruling “should not be interpreted as a finding that Thomas Provenzano is a normal human being without serious mental health problems, because he most certainly is not.”

Their very mental illness may have played a part in their receiving the death sentence – a punishment that is supposed to be reserved for the “worst of the worst” crimes and offenders – either because they were unable to aid their defence lawyers or refused legal assistance, or because their illness or medication made them appear frightening and remorseless to the jury.

Scott Panetti, currently on death row, was allowed to defend himself at his trial, despite being diagnosed as suffering from schizoaffective disorder, a combination of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Scott Panetti conducted his defence dressed as a cowboy and appeared to be hallucinating. After the trial a doctor stated, “In my opinion Scott’s mental illness had an effect on the jurors that was visible... members of the jury had hostile stares and looked at Scott in disbelief while he rambled and

made no sense.” One juror later admitted that they had voted for death out of fear of Scott Panetti’s behaviour at the trial.

The US Supreme Court has outlawed the death penalty for people with “mental retardation” (learning disability) as well as for children under the age of 18 when they committed the crime, on the grounds that their diminished culpability renders the death penalty an excessive punishment when used on offenders from these categories.

While learning disability and mental illness are not the same, their symptoms can have similar consequences. If people with learning disability are exempt from the death penalty, it follows that those with serious mental illness should be as well.

Thomas Provenzano was executed in June 2000 after more than 20 years of mental illness. As his sister asked, where is the justice in that?

See *USA: The execution of mentally ill offenders* (AMR 51/003/2006).

## AI visits Syria after nine year absence

*“I want to thank all the people who don’t know me and yet tried to help... I’m so impressed... it kept me strong, and kept us all determined and stubborn.”*

Ex-prisoner of conscience Fawwaz Tello talking to AI, January 2006

In January AI was allowed to visit Syria for the first time since March 1997. Delegates met senior government officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior, Social Affairs and Labour and met with the head of the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), where many political prisoners and prisoners of conscience have been sentenced following unfair trials.

The delegates also met ex-prisoners of conscience who AI has supported over the years, including five of the “Damascus Spring” detainees, who were released during AI’s visit. Ma’mun al-Humsi, Habib ‘Isa, Riad Seif, Fawwaz Tello and Walid al-Bunni expressed their thanks to AI for its support and for helping expose human rights violations in Syria. Two of the five men said they were tortured in detention. Despite their ordeal some of them expressed their determination to speak out in defence of human rights.

The so-called “Damascus Spring” period followed the 2000 accession to power of President Bashar al-Assad, who initially permitted greater freedom of speech and released hundreds of political prisoners. But in 2001 the authorities clamped down and at least 10 of the people who had taken part in new discussion forums were arrested.

Despite recent releases, at least 300 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience are still detained. The oldest of the “Damascus Spring” detainees, Dr ‘Aref Dalilah, aged 62, continues to serve a 10-year sentence, in poor health and in solitary confinement. Two of those previously released, Habib Salih and Kamal al-Labwani, were re-arrested last year and remain imprisoned.

AI met Khaled Hamdu, brother of prisoner of conscience Mas'oud Hamdu, a Syrian Kurdish student. Mas'oud Hamdu was arrested after he sent Internet sites photographs of a peaceful demonstration in June 2003 calling for the rights of Syrian Kurdish children to be respected. He was held in a cell measuring 1mx2m for over a year, was reportedly tortured, and in October 2004 he was convicted by the SSSC and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. See *the Wire March 2005*.

AI welcomes the Syrian authorities' cooperation but remains concerned at ongoing human rights violations. In particular, the organization urges the authorities to release all prisoners of conscience, to guarantee fair trials for all and to stop the practice of torture. AI also calls on the authorities to implement urgently the human rights reforms which the ruling Ba'th Party Congress recommended in June last year.

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## Religious persecution in Eritrea

*"You will receive no visitors and you will rot here until you sign this paper"*

The reported words of an Eritrean military commander to Helen Berhane, a well-known gospel singer of the Evangelical Rema Church, who has been held incommunicado in Mai Serwa military camp since 13 May 2004

Some 1,750 Evangelical Church members – men, women and children – including at least 26 pastors, three Orthodox Church priests, several Jehovah's Witnesses refusing military conscription, and dozens of members of a new Muslim group, have been imprisoned in Eritrea in the last three years simply for practising their religion. Many are held in inhumane conditions including underground cells and metal shipping containers. The containers are often swelteringly hot in the day and very cold at night, with no sanitary facilities. Detainees receive very poor food and little or no medical care.

In May 2002 the government ordered all religions, other than the four main recognized religions – the Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran Churches and Islam – to close their places of worship and stop practising their faith until they were registered. Those minority religious groups which did apply for registration have received no response. Many continued to gather in private and this appeared to be tolerated by the authorities for some months.

However, in early 2003, the authorities began a crackdown on the 35 or more Evangelical churches in particular. Police and soldiers broke into religious services and weddings being held in private homes, and arrested men, women and children, sometimes beating them. Many were detained without court orders and held incommunicado for indefinite periods.

For example, on 28 May 2005 police raided a wedding party of the Meseret Kristos Church in Asmara and detained the bride and bridegroom and about 200 guests, including gospel singer Essey Stefanos and Pastor Gideon of the Meseret Kristos Church. The bridal couple and over half the guests were released the following month, leaving as many as 70 people detained in Mai Serwa army camp. Many religious detainees have been tortured and threatened with indefinite detention unless they

signed a paper agreeing to recant their faith or not to attend religious meetings. Typically, like many political prisoners, they are tied up for several hours, once or repeatedly, in a position commonly known as “helicopter” (*see sketch*). Prisoners are also beaten by teams of soldiers, or kept in solitary confinement in special underground punishment cells.

There is no law in the penal code in Eritrea criminalizing religious practice, and detentions have been arbitrary, with no possibility of legal redress, and in contravention of the Constitution. No official reason has been given for the crackdown but it reflects the government’s general intolerance of dissent and freedom of expression, whether religious or political. AI considers all those detained on account of their religious beliefs to be prisoners of conscience. Several thousand actual or suspected political opponents are also detained in similar appalling conditions.

The government continues to make blanket denials of the overwhelming evidence of systematic religious persecution. In response to the publication of AI’s report, *Eritrea: Religious Persecution* (AFR 64/013/2005), in December 2005, the Acting Minister of Information, Ali Abdu Ahmed, was reported as saying “Who are these Amnesty International people? We cannot run every day after such unsubstantiated fabrications.” AI continues to receive and investigate reports of human rights violations in Eritrea, including further arrests of Evangelical Christians.

## Afghanistan ‘success’ ebbing away

### Threat of insurgency grows as goodwill towards US troops fades

On 1 February 2006, representatives of the international community, including the UN, concluded the “Afghanistan Compact”, a comprehensive set of measures intended to bolster the reconstruction of the country. The Compact was the conclusion of a conference entitled “Building on Success”.

Yet the “success” that the Afghan government and its international partners are striving to build on is ebbing away. Security has by no means been restored. There are signs that the goodwill widely felt towards US and Coalition (US/CF) forces following the removal of the Taliban from power is being replaced by resentment and opposition because of the human rights violations perpetrated by US/CF forces.

During a visit to Afghanistan in December, AI met some of the hundreds of people whom US/CF forces had detained in mass, arbitrary arrests, following raids on villages and towns. These raids relied on often flawed intelligence about alleged centres of “insurgents”. The soldiers’ conduct in the raids humiliated and degraded local people, notably through their treatment of women and the manner of their searches. Dozens of people reported months of arbitrary detention under US custody at Bagram airbase, held without charge, trial or access to legal representation.

The environment of impunity for US troops flows from the legal agreement between the Afghan and US governments regarding the status of US forces in Afghanistan. Under its terms “parties waive any and all claims against each other for [...] death or injury”. Claims by third parties – such as the victims of abuse – “should, at the

discretion of the United States Government, be dealt with and settled in accordance with United States law”. The discretion of the US government has meant that US troops are, in effect, above the law, able to treat Afghans as they wish without fear of reprisal.

Justice and restitution is likely to elude the families of Dilawar, Habibullah and Abdulwahid. The first two men died in US custody at Bagram in December 2002. While over 20 servicemen were tried on various charges in connection with the men’s deaths, none were held responsible for their deaths. Sentences ranged from reprimands to dishonourable discharges in connection with the “homicides” declared by the US military autopsy. Abdulwahid was arrested by Afghan forces under US command, two years ago. He was fatally wounded when his captors repeatedly thrust a smouldering plastic bottle, filled with cooking oil, into his body. His body was returned to the family by US forces who told them, “We didn’t do it”. AI is not aware of any disciplinary or criminal action taken by the US authorities in this case.

Then there is Aminullah (*see picture*). On 6 December he went to collect water in the woods near his village in Daychopan, southern Afghanistan. He heard gun shots and tried to run home but was shot by US forces in the shoulder. US troops flew Aminullah and his uncle, Mohammad Wali, to the military hospital in Kandahar where he underwent an operation and was discharged. A US official gave them US\$ 100. They had to make their own way home, some 60km away. “God knows that what they gave us is not enough,” Mohammad Wali told AI. Yet, in view of the legal status of the US forces, the family cannot hope for more than this, either in compensation or justice.

AI believes that this is not the only case in which US forces have resorted to excessive and occasionally lethal force in a climate of impunity.

In March AI will publish its findings and recommendations from the December visit to Afghanistan.

## ‘Better not to call the police; things only get worse’

### Police of the Russian Federation are failing to protect women from domestic violence

Liliana was staying in a workers’ hostel just 200 metres from a police station when her former partner stole a key to her bedroom, entered the room and tried to rape her. Liliana and her neighbours called the police 16 times that night, but they failed to come to her aid.

Anna’s husband poured inflammable liquid on her and tried to set her alight. The police told her they could not do anything because “he had not committed a crime”.

Galina was attacked by her husband in front of a police officer – her husband’s friend. His only response was to tell his friend not to attack her with a hammer because “men use their fists”.

Every hour of every day, a woman in the Russian Federation dies at the hands of a relative, partner or former partner. Most will have already endured years of violent abuse before their death. Many will have suffered in silence, knowing that the police would be unwilling, or unable to protect them.

“Many more women would turn to the authorities if they would really help us,” Liliana told AI.

The Russian Federation has no specific law on domestic violence. In Moscow, a city of 10 million, there is not one shelter for victims of violence against women. Without shelters, restraining orders or adequate support from the police, it is almost impossible for women to escape from a violent relationship or prevent the violence continuing.

The size of the problem cannot be overestimated. A 2003 survey of married women in the Russian Federation found that 70 per cent had suffered some form of violence – physical, sexual or mental – from their husbands.

Police officers interviewed by AI admitted that domestic violence is given low priority by the force. Even when perpetrators are detained, they are rarely held for more than three hours, even if this means they are detained and released several times during one night. Often the police do no more than “talk to him man to man” as one officer put it. Their victims, meanwhile, are discouraged from pursuing justice, and even blamed for the violence.

Most of the police officers interviewed felt that a law on family violence was needed as they were lacking the tools to deal with this crime. Yet in 2003, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs claimed in a letter to AI UK that the Russian parliament, and a large part of the population, would consider a law on violence in the family as an interference in private family matters. In such a climate, it is hardly surprising that men feel that they can attack their wives or partners with impunity.

As he beat her head against a wall in front of his police officer friend, Galina’s husband told her, “If I kill you I won’t get punished.” She tried to take him to court but he fled the city and proceedings against him were dropped. Like so many other perpetrators of violence against women in the Russian Federation, he escaped justice.

See *Russian Federation: Nowhere to turn – violence against women in the family* (EUR 46/056/2005).

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## Worldwide Appeals

### Morocco/Western Sahara

#### Human rights defenders imprisoned

Seven Sahrawi human rights defenders were sentenced to prison terms of between seven months and two years in December 2005.

Aminatou Haidar, Ali-Salem Tamek, Mohamed El-Moutaouakil, Houssein Lidri, Brahim Noumria, Larbi Messaoud and H'mad Hammad were convicted on various charges relating to demonstrations in the town of Laayoune in May 2005.

Aminatou Haidar was released in January 2006 at the end of her sentence. At an appeal trial in January 2006, Ali-Salem Tamek's sentence was increased from eight to 10 months' imprisonment; the remaining five had their sentences confirmed. An eighth human rights defender, Brahim Dahane (above), is facing similar charges and is expected to be brought to trial shortly. AI believes they may be prisoners of conscience.

Since May 2005 Moroccan security forces have used heavy-handed methods to break up demonstrations calling for Western Sahara to be granted independence from Morocco, which has ruled it since 1975. Human rights defenders have been harassed and intimidated by the security forces and have reported human rights violations against demonstrators, including one death in suspicious circumstances in October 2005. All eight human rights defenders have been involved in collecting and disseminating information about human rights violations committed by Moroccan forces against Sahrawi protesters in the recent demonstrations.

AI has serious concerns about the fairness of the trials. The convictions were reportedly based on written confessions of guilt which the defendants said that they either never made or made only as a result of torture or ill-treatment in detention. The court failed to examine the defendants' claims of torture. None of the defendants were allowed to call witnesses in their own defence. The right of the accused to call and question witnesses is a cornerstone of the right of defence in a fair trial.

For more information see: *Morocco/Western Sahara: Sahrawi human rights defenders under attack* (MDE 29/008/2005) and *Morocco/Western Sahara: Human rights defenders jailed after questionable trial* (MDE 29/010/2005).

Please write, calling for the immediate release of Ali-Salem Tamek, Mohamed El-Moutaouakil, Houssein Lidri, Brahim Noumria, Larbi Messaoud, H'mad Hammad and Brahim Dahane, unless they are promptly retried in full conformity with international fair trial standards.

Send appeals to: His Excellency Driss Jettou, Prime Minister, Département du Premier Ministre, Palais Royal, Touarga, Rabat, Morocco.  
Fax: +212 37 76 99 95.

## Myanmar

### Longest-serving prisoner of conscience

On 12 March, U Win Tin will spend his 76th birthday in jail. A journalist, former editor and senior opposition party official, he has been imprisoned since 1989. AI believes him to be Myanmar's longest-serving prisoner of conscience. U Win Tin was arrested because of his senior position in the main opposition party, National League for Democracy (NLD). The NLD won 82 per cent of seats in the general election in 1990 but the authorities refused to hand over power.

U Win Tin has spent one fifth of his life in jail for his peaceful opposition to the ruling military authorities and for his defence of human rights and freedom of expression. Detained since 1989, he has been sentenced three times to a total of 20 years' imprisonment. Most recently, in March 1996, U Win Tin was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for communicating with the UN about prison conditions, torture and medical neglect, and for writing and circulating articles in prison. The authorities described this as "secretly publishing propaganda to incite riots in jail".

U Win Tin and others accused with him were held in cells designed for military dogs, made to sleep on concrete floors without bedding and deprived of food and water for long periods. They were also reportedly denied legal representation at their trial.

U Win Tin has been held in solitary confinement for much of his imprisonment. He is known to have chronic health problems, which have been exacerbated by the poor prison conditions. In July 2005, the authorities reportedly told him he would be released with more than 200 political prisoners, but then returned him to his prison cell.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of U Win Tin and hundreds of other prisoners of conscience in Myanmar.

Send appeals to: Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, c/o Ministry of Defence, Ahlanpya Phaya Street, Yangon, Myanmar.

## Ethiopia

### Human rights defender at risk

Founder and former Chair of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, aged 75, has been detained since early November 2005 following opposition party demonstrations to protest peacefully against alleged fraud in Ethiopia's May elections.

Eighty-five others are in custody with him, including leaders of the opposition party Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), to which he belongs, independent journalists and anti-poverty activists, whom AI considers to be prisoners of conscience. The charges against them, many carrying the death penalty, include "high treason", "inciting and organizing armed uprising" and "genocide".

Most defendants are boycotting the legal proceedings in protest. They are held in Kaliti prison in the capital, Addis Ababa, with restricted access to their families and legal representatives.

Several thousand other suspected government opponents are reportedly still detained without charge in relation to the November demonstrations, when the security forces shot dead 42 demonstrators.

AI is concerned about Professor Mesfin Woldemariam's health in prison, particularly on account of his advanced age. Prior to his arrest, he was in bed for two months suffering from severe back pain requiring regular medical attention. In prison, he

manages to walk with a stick. In December, he was among several CUD members who went on a hunger strike for several weeks. He resumed his hunger strike in February.

Mesfin Woldemariam, Ethiopia's most prominent human rights defender, is a retired geography professor from Addis Ababa University. He recently spent a year at Harvard University, USA.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Professor Mesfin Woldemariam and all those detained with him solely for the peaceful expression of their opinions.

Send appeals to: Prime Minister, His Excellency Meles Zenawi, Office of the Prime Minister, PO Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Fax: + 251 11 552020.

## Worldwide Appeal updates

### Libya

In September 2005, the Supreme Court overturned the sentences imposed on 85 Muslim Brothers, including the two death sentences imposed on Abdullah Ahmed Izzedin (top) and Salem Abu Hanak (bottom), and ordered their retrial. Since then Abdullah Ahmed Izzedin and Salem Abu Hanak have appeared before an ad hoc court three times – in October and December 2005 and on 30 January 2006. On each occasion the trial was postponed for a variety of reasons. Their case is due to come before the court again on 18 March.

AI is concerned that no information is available about whether the ad hoc court meets international standards on fair trial.

See *Worldwide Appeal* May 2002.

### Viet Nam

Internet dissident and prisoner of conscience Nguyen Khac Toan was released in late January after spending four years in prison. He was jailed for emailing details of farmers' protests about official corruption and land confiscation to overseas Vietnamese groups. However, he is now held under house arrest for the next three years and AI is calling for the immediate removal of this restriction.

See *Worldwide Appeal* August 2005.

### Germany /USA

The German authorities have said that Murat Kurnaz will be allowed to return to Germany and have his residency permit renewed if he is released from US detention in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. This welcome news follows public condemnation of

Guantánamo by senior German government officials. However, they gave no indication of when Murat Kurnaz might be released.

See *Worldwide Appeal* June 2005.

Please continue to send appeals calling for Murat Kurnaz to be released immediately unless he is to be tried in accordance with international standards.

Send appeals to: Alberto Gonzales, Attorney General, US Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20530-0001, USA. Fax: + 1 202 307 6777. Email: AskDOJ@usdoj.gov

## Cambodia

AI welcomed the release of Cheam Channy, prisoner of conscience and opposition parliamentarian, in February 2006, following a royal pardon. He was sentenced to seven years in prison in February 2005 after an unfair trial by a Military Court – which has no jurisdiction over civilians. According to AI’s information there was no basis to the charges against him.

See *Worldwide Appeal* November 2005.

## Honduras

Indigenous activist and prisoner of conscience Feliciano Pineda was released from prison on 2 February 2006. However, he has not been fully acquitted and AI continues to be concerned for his safety.

See *Worldwide Appeal* February 2006.

## Meeting of NGOs in Middle East denounces deals on detainee transfers

A gathering of human rights organizations convened by AI in Beirut in January condemned the UK’s flawed deals on detainee transfers for increasing the risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

The two-day meeting of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the Middle East and North Africa concluded that the memorandums of understanding signed or being negotiated between the UK and countries in the region – aiming at handing over suspects of terrorism – undermine the absolute prohibition on torture. The UK has so far concluded three such agreements – with Jordan, Lebanon and Libya – and is negotiating others with at least Algeria and Egypt. The agreements provide “diplomatic assurances” that detainees will not be tortured, ill-treated or unfairly tried after their transfer to these countries, despite the systemic practice of torture in these countries.

By setting out a special system to monitor the treatment of a few individuals, the agreements are intrinsically discriminatory. The safeguards they provide fall below

those contained in international law. They lack enforcement mechanisms and provisions for a remedy in case of a breach. See *Memorandums of Understanding and NGO Monitoring: a challenge to fundamental human rights* (POL 30/002/2006) and *'Diplomatic Assurances' No protection against torture or ill-treatment* (ACT 40/021/2005).

To find out more about AI's campaign to stop torture and other ill-treatment in the "war on terror" see: [www.amnesty.org/stoptorture](http://www.amnesty.org/stoptorture)

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## Control Arms campaigning at the World Social Forums

In Mali they came to the World Social Forum (WSF) wearing black, red and white T-shirts, an army whose weapons were pens, cameras and a commitment to ending the unregulated trade in arms. The global trade in weapons has left more than eight million small arms circulating around West Africa, fuelling conflicts that have stolen tens of thousands of young lives and arrested development in the region. So it was a fitting place for Control Arms campaigners to raise support for a global Arms Trade Treaty.

Volunteers from the Control Arms coalition (Oxfam, IANSA and AI) collected more than 27,000 signatures from people from around the world who raised their hands to say "No" to gun violence. Over the five days of the Forum volunteers from AI Mali, together with Control Arms campaigners from Oxfam, pressed journalists and development activists to support the campaign for a global Arms Trade Treaty. Activities included a press conference and a seminar as well as a concert attended by 25,000 fans of Ivorian reggae star and Control Arms spokesman Tiken Jah Fakoly.

The Venezuela WSF was launched on 24 January with a march through the streets of Caracas, vibrant with colour, song, banners and flags. AI Venezuela and Control Arms campaigners were there again to raise concerns on the proliferation of arms and the need for an international Arms Trade Treaty.

Around 200 people attended a conference which was held in central Caracas and recorded for Venezuela TV. As well as addressing the use of arms and their impact on peoples' lives, the seminar generated animated discussion and gave an excellent overview of the Control Arms campaign. Participants came from across the Americas and even as far afield as Egypt.

Volunteers engaged people on the streets of Caracas in discussion about the issues of the campaign. They distributed Control Arms wristbands which are now being worn by thousands of WSF participants. The loud, vibrant music and dancing of La Capoeira band drew in the crowds and AI's stall was a hub of activity. Over 5,000 photos were collected for the Million Faces petition.

The Million Faces petition is collecting photos and self portraits from around the world to reach a goal of one million faces by June 2006. The faces will send a powerful, global message of support to the world's governments for an international Arms Trade Treaty.

The Control Arms campaign is launching an international “100 Day Countdown” in the lead up to the UN Conference which will review controls over small arms. Starting on 16 March and ending just before the UN Review Conference on 25 June, the countdown will culminate with events in New York, USA, to mark the start of the conference. The aim is to involve as many people as possible to promote the campaign and convey the message to the UN that it is time to start negotiating an Arms Trade Treaty – and this could be agreed at the UN General Assembly in October this year.

To sign up and get involved go to: [www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)

## El Salvador fails to meet deadline set by Inter-American Court

The government of El Salvador has failed to comply with most of the recommendations made in the ruling issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in March 2005, despite a deadline of 29 March 2006 having been set. The judgement called on the government to investigate and punish those responsible for human rights violations in the country during the internal armed conflict between 1980 and 1991.

In particular, the government must investigate the unresolved case of Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz, who were aged seven and three years when they were forcibly separated from their parents during the course of military operations by the state. See *the Wire* October 2004.

There have been no advances in the internal judicial proceedings and the State has not yet publicly acknowledged its responsibility nor apologized to the Serrano Cruz family in a public ceremony in Chalatenango city, with the presence of high authorities of the State, as required by the IACHR.

Please write, calling on the El Salvador government to comply with the ruling of the IACHR within the established time limit.

Send appeals to: President Elías Antonio Saca, Casa Presidencial, Avda. Dr Manuel Enrique Arango 5500, Frente a Canal 6, San Salvador, El Salvador. Fax: +503 2243 9947 Email: [www.casapres.gob.sv/precartas.htm](http://www.casapres.gob.sv/precartas.htm)

## AI helps free torture victim in Moldova

When Sergei Gurgurov was taken to court on 3 November he was unable to walk unaided and shook uncontrollably. The 27-year-old man had been arrested a week earlier and allegedly beaten and tortured with electric shocks by police to force him to confess to stealing a mobile phone. The court refused a request to extend his detention and ordered his release under house arrest. Instead the police moved him to another temporary holding facility.

AI took up Sergei Gurgurov’s case as an Urgent Action and in the following weeks thousands of members from all over the world wrote letters on his behalf. The Urgent

Action attracted a lot of attention in Moldova and on 23 November AI Moldova organized a press conference with the two lawyers working on the case.

On 9 December Sergei Gurgurov was released on bail. Unfortunately the torture he suffered has left him in such bad health that he was unable to attend the hearing that led to his release. Instead he was taken by stretcher straight from the detention centre to a hospital.

Talking to a member of AI Moldova on 24 January, assistants of the Deputy General Prosecutor complained that they were receiving up to 150 letters a day, and that campaigning on his case was damaging Moldova's international image. On 18 January the Prosecutor's office refused to start a criminal case against the police officers concerned.

## Former Peruvian President must be brought to justice

*"...they took the son I most loved, my first-born... I had to look for him under the earth to find him... How could this government have pardoned them [the killers] in my name?"*

Raída Córdor, mother of Armando Amaro Córdor

Armando Amaro Córdor was one of the hundreds of people who "disappeared" or were killed by Peruvian security forces, including the "death squad" Grupo Colina during the presidency of Alberto Fujimori, in 1990 to 2000.

The killing of Armando Amaro Córdor, eight other students and a university professor in 1992 caused national and international outrage. Members of Grupo Colina were tried and convicted of the killings, but were freed in an amnesty shortly after their detention. The amnesty legalized impunity, prohibiting all investigations into human rights violations committed by the security forces in Peru's 20-year internal armed conflict.

This amnesty was reversed in 2000, following the resignation of President Fujimori, and all the members of Grupo Colina are now charged with human rights violations. Alberto Fujimori, however, escaped justice by fleeing to Japan.

In November 2005 Alberto Fujimori travelled to Chile, where he was arrested. The Peruvian authorities have requested his extradition to face charges including forced disappearance, extrajudicial executions and torture. The Chilean courts are reviewing the request.

The widespread and systematic nature of the human rights violations committed during Alberto Fujimori's presidency constitute crimes against humanity.

To find out more about why AI is campaigning for Alberto Fujimori to be brought to justice see *Peru/Chile: Serious human rights violations during the presidency of Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000)* (AMR 46/007/2005).

**ACT NOW! BRING FUJIMORI TO JUSTICE!**

go to: [www.amnesty.org.uk/action/fujimori.shtml](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/action/fujimori.shtml) and sign the petition to bring Fujimori to justice