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**@GOVERNMENTS LET TORTURERS,  
STATE ASSASSINS GET AWAY WITH ABUSES**

**Amnesty International's Annual Report  
details violations in 142 countries**

**Governments around the world are breeding contempt for human rights by letting their forces get away with abduction, torture and murder, Amnesty International said as it released its 1992 annual report today.**

**"As long as the torturers, the state assassins and those who give the orders act with a free hand and without fear of punishment, the cycle of violations will never be broken," the human rights organization said.**

**A growing number of governments have said they will stand up for human rights, but all too often they ignore past violations, set up tribunals or investigations simply as a whitewash, and pass amnesty laws in the name of political expediency, Amnesty International said.**

**The organization's global survey covering 142 countries shows the result of letting human rights violations go unpunished. In 1991 alone, people were jailed as prisoners of conscience in about half the countries in the world, and more than 100 governments continued to torture or ill-treat prisoners.**

**People also "disappeared" in some 26 countries and remained missing in many more, extrajudicial executions were carried out in 45 countries, and death sentences were handed down in more than 50 countries and carried out in 33 countries.**

**"Paying lip service to human rights in new laws and international declarations achieves nothing if in the end governments don't act on violations," Amnesty International said.**

In Africa, where governments have been slow to tackle past human rights violations, the political killings continued, with extrajudicial executions reported in Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Rwanda. In Burundi 1,000 or more extrajudicial executions were committed against a backdrop of ethnic tensions; in South Africa, hundreds of government opponents were extrajudicially executed with the acquiescence or direct involvement of the government's security forces. Elsewhere in the region, torture was taking place in Sudan on a daily basis in detention centres known as "ghost houses", while in Uganda hundreds of suspected opponents of the government were detained during counter-insurgency operations.

"Governments in Africa and throughout the world often use the violence of opposition groups as an excuse for letting their security forces get away with human rights violations," Amnesty International said. "While we condemn torture, hostage-taking and deliberate and arbitrary killings by such groups, those abuses can never justify government counter-terror."

Extrajudicial killings and "disappearances" continued in the Americas as well, where sweeping amnesty laws in a number of countries have let the state killers go free. In 1991, hundreds of street children died at the hands of death squads in Brazil, hundreds more were killed by the army or paramilitaries in Colombia and more than 300 people "disappeared" and at least 60 were extrajudicially executed in Peru. Hundreds of extrajudicial executions took place following the overthrow of President Aristide's government in Haiti, where there were also widespread reports of torture and arbitrary detention. Up to three hundred possible prisoners of conscience remained in prison in Cuba. In the USA there were more than 2,500 people on death row and 14 executions throughout the year - a figure that was already surpassed in the first six months of 1992.

In Asia, too, governments frequently shut the door on the gross violations of the past only to see them continue in the present. The mass extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" in Sri Lanka in previous years have gone unpunished; in 1991 more political killings and "disappearances" were reported there while hundreds of other people were extrajudicially executed in Indonesia, including in East Timor. Elsewhere, political opponents continued to be imprisoned in their thousands, with more than 1,500 political prisoners - many of them prisoners of conscience - held in Myanmar (Burma). Hundreds of thousands of people were held without charge under administrative detention in China, where hundreds of prisoners of conscience were also still behind bars. The rise in the use of the death penalty also continued in China with more than 1,000 known executions. In India political detainees and criminal suspects were routinely tortured, sometimes to death.

In Europe, the fighting in Yugoslavia led to large scale human rights violations including torture and massacres of civilians by all sides in the conflict, while political killings also took place in Turkey, mainly among the Kurdish population in the southeast. In the former USSR, statistics were released for the first time revealing that in past years hundreds of people had been sentenced to death and executed. In France, Greece and Switzerland, hundreds of prisoners of conscience were held, all of them conscientious objectors to military service. Torture of political opponents continued to be widespread in Turkey; in the United Kingdom, reports of ill-treatment continued, amidst concern about interrogation and detention procedures used in Northern Ireland. In many countries, governments often didn't investigate allegations of ill-treatment by police or prison guards or when they did the investigations were inconclusive.

In the Middle East, Iraq and Kuwait were the scene of massive human rights violations, with arbitrary arrests, torture, "disappearances" and killings following the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and similar atrocities committed by Iraqi soldiers in the wake of uprisings in March and April. There, as in other parts of the region, years of impunity have fuelled the violations. In the Israeli-Occupied Territories, thousands of Palestinians were tortured or ill-treated during interrogation.

**Hundreds of "disappeared" people were still unaccounted for in Morocco, despite the release of hundreds of others during the year; and torture continued to escalate in Tunisia as the government cracked down on Islamic opponents. In Iran hundreds of people remained in prison after unfair trials held in previous years.**

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