

Torture Appeal leaflets

ACT 40/08/00

Common text for all leaflets

Join our campaign

Torture is used in well over half the countries of the world. Torture is neither inevitable nor natural. There is no shortage of information on how to stop it – only a shortage of political will. Amnesty International's campaign aims to put pressure on those with the power to stop torture. Help us to make a difference.

Make the world a torture free zone

- * Contact your national Amnesty International office to find out more about the campaign
- * Become a member of Amnesty International
- * Make a donation to support Amnesty International's work
- * Tell friends and family about the campaign and ask them to join too
- * Register to take action against torture at www.stoptorture.org

I would like to join your campaign.

Please send me more information

I would like to join Amnesty International.

Please send me details

I would like to donate to Amnesty International's campaign to stamp out torture

Amount

Credit card number

Expiry date

Signature

Name

Address

Steps to stamp out torture

Condemn torture Political leaders must make clear that torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment will never be tolerated.

Ensure protection Governments are responsible for ensuring freedom from torture: preventive safeguards must be established and enforced, including those in Amnesty International's 12-Point Program for the Prevention of Torture.

Investigate and bring to justice All reports of torture must be promptly and effectively investigated by the authorities. All those responsible for torture must be brought to justice, wherever they may be.

Ensure redress Those who have suffered torture must be entitled to full and timely reparation, including compensation and rehabilitation.

Eliminate violence against women Governments must combat all forms of violence against women, including torture.

Fight discrimination Governments must combat discrimination and other factors which contribute to torture, including lack of public awareness of human rights.

Protect children Governments must take special measures to protect children.

Provide training Police, prison officers and the armed forces must be trained and motivated to oppose torture.

Abolish cruel punishments Judicial punishments which amount to torture or ill-treatment must be abolished.

Ensure decent prison conditions Conditions of detention must not breach international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Protect refugees No one may be forcibly returned to a country where they risk being tortured.

Ratify treaties All governments should ratify the UN Convention against Torture, with declarations providing for individual and inter-state complaints.

What are you doing to stamp out torture?

I am writing to ask you to support the worldwide campaign to stamp out torture. Please implement these steps and declare your state a torture free zone. Please let me know what you are doing to implement these steps to stamp out torture.

Signature

Name

Address

Argentina

Vanesa Lorena Ledesma was arrested on 11 February 2000. Five days later she was dead.

Investigate the death in custody of Vanesa Lorena Ledesma and bring those responsible to justice.

Vanesa Lorena Ledesma was arrested in Córdoba, Argentina, on 11 February 2000. Five days later she was dead. A police report recorded that she had died as a result of a “cardiac arrest”. However, an autopsy reportedly revealed that her body showed signs of torture including indications that she had been beaten while handcuffed; severe bruising to the feet, arms, back and shoulders were recorded. There also appeared to be a discrepancy of at least a day between the actual time of death and that recorded by the police responsible for her detention. Complaints about the treatment of Vanesa Lorena Ledesma have been lodged with both the provincial and national authorities.

Vanesa Lorena Ledesma, a 47-year-old transvestite whose legal name was Miguel Angel Ledesma, was an active member of the United Transvestites Association of Córdoba. She was detained in a bar during a fight and charged with damaging the bar. At the police station she was segregated from other prisoners; apparently the reason given for holding her in incommunicado detention was not to protect her, but to avoid other detainees having to share a cell with a “sick” person. According to reports, Vanesa Lorena Ledesma was HIV-positive and attended the local hospital for periodic check-ups which indicated that she was in good health.

Lesbian, gay and transgendered people continue to be the victims of harassment and discrimination at the hands of the Argentine police. Provincial legislation, which allows the police to detain people for acts which are not criminal offences, has frequently been used to detain transvestites, transsexuals, gay men and lesbians. There are concerns that these powers of detention have facilitated torture or ill-treatment.

There are continuing reports that lesbian, gay and transgendered people in Argentina are being detained in police stations in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions and that they are the victims of beatings, sexual harassment and extortion by the officers responsible for their detention. Nadia Echazu, a transvestite, was walking in a Buenos Aires street in December 1997 when she was stopped by four men, believed to be police officers. They hit her, pinned her arms behind her back and pushed her to the ground, before forcing her into their car. She was taken to ‘Seccional 25’ police station where she was kicked and beaten all over her body by police. When she screamed in pain she was put into a straitjacket which was only removed when other detainees protested. That same day Nadia Echazu had been due to appear at a tribunal investigating the treatment of transvestites detained at police stations 23 and 25. Nadia Echazu was released without charge late in the evening.

Many victims have not lodged complaints about their treatment for fear of reprisals. Those complaints which have been lodged have largely been ignored by the authorities or have been investigated in a way which suggests that, despite the gravity of the allegations, they are not being taken seriously.

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Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Señor Gobernador de la Provincia de Córdoba
Dr. José Manuel de la Sota
Casa de Gobierno
Calle Boulevard Chacabuco 1300
5000 Córdoba
Argentina

A group of transvestites protest outside the central police station about the death in custody of Vanesa Lorena Ledesma

*Photos: (front panel) Vanesa Lorena Ledesma after her death © private;
(above) © Voz del Interior*

Austria

‘He was thrashing around wildly and trying over and over to get air. But the officials did nothing... The man appeared to be really fighting for his life.’

Ensure that those responsible for the death of Marcus Omofuma are brought to justice.

Marcus Omofuma, a Nigerian national being forcibly deported from Austria, died after becoming unconscious on board a plane on 1 May 1999.

While the cause of his death remains in dispute, there is serious concern that the methods of restraint and level of force used by police officers on Marcus Omofuma when he resisted his deportation contributed to his death.

According to witnesses, Marcus Omofuma was bound and gagged like “a slaughtered animal” and carried on board the aircraft by police officers. Three officers then forced him into an empty row of seats at the back of the aircraft and strapped him down using adhesive tape; they wrapped “the entire upper part of his body and arms with adhesive tape, like a mummy”. When he continued to protest, officers applied more adhesive tape to his chin and used a plastic belt to tie him further into the seat. One witness reported that “he was thrashing around wildly and trying over and over to get air. But the officials did nothing... The man appeared to be really fighting for his life.”

The flight was destined for Sofia, Bulgaria, from where the Austrian authorities had reserved a seat for Marcus Omofuma on a connecting flight to Lagos, Nigeria, on 2 May 1999. However, when the aircraft landed in Bulgaria, Marcus Omofuma was already unconscious. By the time a doctor arrived to treat him, he was dead. An autopsy, conducted in Bulgaria shortly after his death, concluded that Marcus Omofuma had died of asphyxia.

More than one year later, the judicial investigation into Marcus Omofuma’s death is still under way. It is still not clear to what extent the three police officers who accompanied Marcus Omofuma on the aircraft will be held responsible for their actions because of a dispute about the cause of death — a second autopsy, which was conducted in Austria, suggested that a previously undetected heart defect may have contributed to Marcus Omofuma’s death.

Inquiries to date have revealed a considerable degree of ambiguity among police officers about the types of physical restraints which they believe they were permitted to use during deportations in May 1999. The Head of Vienna’s Alien Police Branch reportedly banned the use of gagging in September 1998, stating that “deportees are to be returned to the police jail, if expulsion is only possible through the gagging of the mouth”.

However, in May 1999 one of the three police officers accused of involvement in the deportation of Marcus Omofuma reportedly stated that everyone in his police department knew about the practice of gagging detainees during forcible deportations.

The Minister of the Interior issued a statement in May 1999, explicitly prohibiting the use of mouth gags. Amnesty International continues to press for clearer guidelines on the use of force and the types of restraints which may be employed during forcible expulsions.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Minister of the Interior Ernst Strasser
Ministry of the Interior/Bundesministerium für Inneres
Postfach 100
A-1014 Vienna
Austria

Vigil held in Vienna in May 2000, the first anniversary of Marcus Omofuma's death
Photos: (front panel) © private; (above) © Semotan

Brazil

Other boys held in the police station said that the beating was so severe they thought he would be killed.

Bring those responsible for the torture of the son of Iraci Oliveira dos Santos to justice.

Fifteen-year-old José (not his real name) was arrested in June 1999 and held for two days. During that time he was beaten so severely by civil police officers that he has needed psychiatric treatment ever since. Latest reports indicate that José is also still receiving treatment for damage to his testicles as a result of the beatings.

José left his home in Xinguara, Pará state, on the afternoon of 7 June to go to a bingo hall with friends. His mother, Iraci Oliveira dos Santos, became concerned when he did not return that night and searched for him in local hospitals before going to the police station where she was told he had been detained.

After waiting for several hours, she was eventually allowed to see José on the evening of 8 June. She says she found him in great pain and covered in bruises. One of the other boys being held told her that José had been badly treated both inside and outside the police station and that she should take her son away as soon as possible.

José told his mother that he had been followed by the police when he left home, and had become scared and fallen off his motorbike. The police stopped, aimed their guns at him, kicked him and threatened to kill him. They drove him to an unknown location where they beat and threatened him again. Finally he was taken to the police station, accused of possessing a small amount of cannabis and a small handgun. In the evening, the police took José into the corridor of the police station and beat him once again. Other boys held in the police station said that the beating was so severe they thought he would be killed. José was forced to confess to previous arrests which had not taken place.

On 9 June Iraci Oliveira dos Santos tried to speak to the Police Chief about her son's detention, but he refused to see her, saying that she had been impolite to his officers. The police let her know through a friend that she could take her son home if she agreed not to make a complaint about his treatment. Anxious to get medical treatment for her son, she agreed.

Since his release José has suffered from psychological problems and has been admitted to a psychiatric institution on several occasions for periods of one or two months. After the new year holiday, which he spent with his family, his mental condition worsened dramatically. He was readmitted to the psychiatric hospital on 16 February 2000 and remains a patient there.

Although José was released from police custody on condition that Iraci Oliveira dos Santos did not complain about her son's treatment, she has since made a formal complaint to the Public Prosecutor. The Public Prosecutor has referred the case for investigation to the same Police Chief in charge of the police station where José was tortured. Iraci Oliveira dos Santos is so appalled at the treatment received by her son that she has taken the rare — and brave — step of publicizing the case in Brazil and appearing on television. There have been widespread reports of police brutality in Xinguara, of which very few have been investigated, often because survivors and witnesses have been too frightened to come forward.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

State Governor of Pará
Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Pará
Sr. Almir José de Oliveira Gabriel
Palácio dos Despachos
Rod. Montenegro KM 9
66823-010
Belém - PA
Brazil

Iraci Oliveira dos Santos was brave enough to bring the torture of her son to public attention
Photo: © AI

People's Republic of China

Abdulhelil was taken to the local jail, where he was severely tortured... a prisoner witnessed a prison guard setting a dog on him.

Bring those responsible for the torture of Abdulhelil Abdumijit to justice.

Abdulhelil Abdumijit was detained on 5 February 1997 in Gulja city, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). He was beaten by police officers and taken to the local jail, where he was severely tortured to make him confess to his "crimes" and denounce his friends. He was made to face a wall and raise his arms while police officers beat his back. An official confirmed that Abdulhelil Abdumijit had been detained on suspicion of leading a demonstration, but the authorities have disclosed no further information about him. He was last reported to be detained in a prison run by the Xinjiang Construction and Production Corps 4th Division (the Bingtuan) outside Gulja, where he continued to be ill-treated; a prisoner witnessed a prison guard setting a dog on him.

Abdulhelil Abdumijit, a street trader, was one of hundreds of people who came out onto the streets of Gulja on 5 February 1997. The demonstrators waved banners and shouted slogans calling for an end to discrimination against ethnic Uighurs. According to reports, after several hours of peaceful protest, armed police units arrived and arrested as many as 500 people. The following day a curfew was imposed on Gulja, riot squads were drafted in and the city was sealed off from the outside world for two weeks. Sporadic protests and rioting continued for several days. Scores of people were killed or injured in clashes between police and protesters, and thousands of protesters were believed to have been detained.

Particularly disturbing allegations have been made about the brutal treatment of people held in Gulja after the February 1997 protests and about the use in the XUAR of some forms of torture which, to Amnesty International's knowledge, are not being used elsewhere in China. There is a striking absence of official reports about prosecutions for torture in the XUAR — in sharp contrast with other parts of China. This suggests that the authorities are either ignoring or covering up widespread torture in the region, or may even have sanctioned its use in the context of repression.

Until 1949 the Uighurs, many of whom are Muslims, were the majority ethnic group in the XUAR; now they account for less than half of the population. Economic development in recent years has largely bypassed the Uighur population, who complain of discrimination in education and health care and suffer from high unemployment levels. At the same time, government policies have steadily eroded the Uighurs' social, economic and cultural rights. Since the late 1980s the government has also placed restrictions on their religious activities. Many mosques and religious schools have been closed down, and Muslims working in government offices are forbidden to practise their religion.

The forms of torture most frequently reported in the XUAR include severe beating and kicking; the use of electric batons; the use of handcuffs, shackles or ropes to tie prisoners in positions which cause intense pain; and exposure to extreme cold or heat. Other methods of torture reported in the XUAR, but not in the rest of the country, include the use of unidentified injections which cause the victim to become mentally unbalanced or to lose the ability to speak coherently; the insertion of pepper or chilli powder in the mouth, nose or genital organs; and the insertion of horse hair or wires into the penis.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:
Chairman of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Regional People's Government
Abdulahat Abdurixit Zhuxi

Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu
2 Zhongshanlu
Wulumuqishi 830041
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China

Uighur demonstrators face the police in Gulja, 5 February 1997
Photos: © private

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Jeannine was taken from a military detention centre to hotels in Kinshasa on several different occasions and raped by soldiers.

Bring those responsible for the torture of Jeannine Bouchez Mwayuma to justice.

Jeannine Bouchez Mwayuma was repeatedly whipped, twice each morning and twice each evening, by members of the Congolese security forces. Her captors threatened to kill her, accusing her of having “betrayed the country”. She was taken from a military detention centre to hotels in Kinshasa on several different occasions and raped by soldiers.

Jeannine Bouchez Mwayuma, aged 26, lived in Bukavu, in the east of the country, an area devastated by repeated fighting between government forces and rebel troops. She left her home and fled to the capital Kinshasa, hoping to escape the renewed civil war which broke out in August 1998. She believed that Kinshasa, which was controlled by government troops, would offer safety and security.

However, on 28 December 1998, she was arrested and accused of having contacts with armed political groups in Bukavu. She was held in a cell at the Conseil national de sécurité, National Security Council, for more than a week. Then she was taken to another detention centre, where she was severely beaten — she was hit repeatedly with a metal pipe. A military officer and several soldiers took her to a hotel in the Kintambo district of Kinshasa, where they raped her.

Jeannine Bouchez Mwayuma was transferred to yet another Kinshasa military detention centre, run by a unit known as DEMIAP. In the following days and weeks, she was reportedly taken away by a senior military officer and raped on several occasions in Kinshasa hotel rooms. On 17 February 1999, she appeared in front of a military court, charged with endangering the security of the state, an offence carrying the death penalty. More than 100 civilians and soldiers sentenced to death by this military court have been executed since early 1999.

On 9 March 2000, before her trial had ended, she was provisionally released as a result of a presidential amnesty. Under the terms of her release, she is not allowed to leave Kinshasa, and could be rearrested at any time.

Jeannine Bouchez Mwayuma’s ordeal did not end there. Not only did she have to deal with the physical and emotional after-effects of being tortured, but she continued to be harassed by members of the security forces demanding sex.

Thousands of unarmed civilians have been tortured and subjected to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment since the outbreak of civil war in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in August 1998. Like Jeannine Bouchez Mwayuma, many of those detained and tortured have been accused of links with armed political groups which control much of the north and east of the country. Hundreds of people have been tortured on the merest suspicion of having connections with such groups. Some have been killed or tortured by the government’s security forces just because they live in an area where there is traditional support for armed political groups. In centres run by the military security services, torture is reported to be routine. Government officials have themselves ordered and supervised the torture of detainees.

The security forces are responsible to President Laurent-Désiré Kabila alone — they are not answerable to the courts. This makes it virtually impossible for civilians to challenge the legal basis of their detention, or to take legal action to protect themselves from human rights violations.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Président Laurent-Désiré Kabila
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Soldiers in the central market in Kinshasa. Thousands of unarmed civilians have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment by military security forces.

Photos: (front panel) © AI; (above) © Reuters

Egypt

'I said that I would write and sign anything they wanted me to... I signed those papers... Then they took me outside the building and let me go.'

Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas

Bring those responsible for the torture of Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas to justice.

Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas was interrogated and tortured by officers of the State Security Investigations Department (SSI) for the first time in Cairo on 26 April 1993. The officers reportedly made her undress, tied her hands and feet and suspended her from a bar, beat her repeatedly with a rubber hose and a stick, blindfolded her, and threatened to rape her. At times she could hear her husband, Ahmad Mohammad Ahmad al-Sayyid, who had been arrested earlier that day, screaming in another room.

After roughly 24 hours of interrogation Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas signed a statement saying that SSI officers had found weapons and explosives at the couple's home; she was released immediately. The statement was reportedly used by a military court, during a trial held in May 1993, to convict her husband and sentence him to 25 years' imprisonment.

After her release, Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas filed a complaint with the Director of the Prosecution Office in al-Doqqi district, Cairo, about her torture at the SSI branch in Gaber bin Hayyan Street. She was interviewed at length on 4 May 1993 and a forensic medical report, issued on 8 May 1993, concluded that her injuries were consistent with her allegations of torture. In September 1993 the Director of the Prosecution Office in al-Doqqi summoned two SSI officers, identified by Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas as her torturers, to come to the Prosecution Office for investigation. They failed to present themselves and ignored 56 subsequent summonses. In January 1996, one officer responded to the summons, but denied the allegations. Later that month, the SSI denied that anyone named Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas had been held at the SSI branch in Gaber bin Hayyan Street between 26 and 28 April 1993.

In July 1996 SSI officers rearrested Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas and took her to an SSI branch in al-Marsa district to try to coerce her into withdrawing her complaint. They reportedly slashed her arms, back and legs with a sharp knife, blindfolded her, suspended her from the ceiling by one arm for two hours, and gave her electric shocks. After 10 days of torture, the SSI officers dumped her, unconscious, in the street. Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas' attempts to file subsequent complaints have been unsuccessful.

In October 1999 Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas was contacted by a television company to arrange an interview about her treatment in detention. The night before the interview was due to take place, SSI officers telephoned her to ask why she wanted to give the interview. They came to her house early the next morning, "bugged" the rooms with surveillance equipment and threatened her with arrest. When the television company arrived Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas was unable to continue with the interview.

Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas' experience was not an isolated one. In May 1999 the UN Committee against Torture expressed its concern about the "treatment of female detainees, by both the police and the State Security Intelligence, which sometimes involves sexual abuse or threats in order to obtain information relating to husbands or other family members".

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace
Cairo
Egypt

Amal Farouq Mohammad al-Maas adds her signature to the millions of others pledging to do everything in their power "to ensure that the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights become a reality throughout the world" as part of Amnesty International's campaign in 1998
Photo: © AI

Hungary

The three boys were beaten and threatened with death... The three girls were subjected to racist and sexist slurs.

Investigate the torture of Norbert Batyi and his friends and bring those responsible to justice.

Thirteen-year-old Monika (not her real name) was reportedly dragged out of bed on a Sunday morning, slapped around the face by police officers and taken to the police station in her nightclothes. Police officers insulted her, calling her a “dirty whore”, and threatened to kill her. Monika is the youngest of six Romani youngsters who were arrested during a violent police raid on an apartment block in north Budapest on 5 September 1999. Just before midday Hungarian police officers broke into two flats in the 13th district, reportedly without explanation and without producing a warrant. Gradually, the group of friends, who were sleeping in the flats after a party the night before, understood that they were being accused of attacking a pregnant woman, and causing her to miscarry.

The three boys were beaten and threatened with death. Police officers pushed 16-year-old Sándor (not his real name) and 21-year-old Norbert Batyi to the floor and cuffed their hands behind their backs. Then they beat the prostrate youngsters about the head, shoulders and back with a vipera, a three-part retractable weapon. One officer stood on Sándor’s wrists while he was handcuffed and lying on the floor. Another officer held him in an armlock, ramming his head against a metal door in the courtyard. Miklós Drótos, aged 17, was beaten in bed and police officers later trod on his neck while he lay on the ground.

The three girls were subjected to racist and sexist slurs. Police officers slapped Elvira Varga, aged 19, around the face and head, perforating her eardrum, after she denied knowing anything about the attack on the pregnant woman. A policeman slapped 17-year-old Lilla (not her real name) on the face and told her: “A baby died because of you”.

At the police station, Sándor’s head was rammed against the door of the police station. Sándor and Norbert Batyi were beaten for a further 45 minutes in a corridor in the police station, where they could hear Miklós Drótos screaming. When Sándor told police officers that he was having difficulty breathing and that he felt a sharp pain in his chest, an ambulance was called but the police would not allow the paramedics to take him to hospital.

Police officers who interviewed the three girls subjected them to further verbal abuse. Although officers were told that Monika was only 13 years old, they made no attempt to contact her mother, despite requests. When they discovered that Elvira Varga was 19 years old, they told her: “You are not a juvenile. You can be beaten.”

The young people’s parents arrived at the police station in the early evening. They were soon joined by representatives of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, and together they filed a complaint. The six were released without charge from custody at around 9pm.

The Hungarian Minister of the Interior justified the police action, claiming that the police took “coercive measures” because the young Roma behaved aggressively. Yet the youngsters were asleep, dressed only in their nightclothes, when the police arrived in large numbers and heavily armed.

Discrimination against the Roma minority in Hungary is multi-faceted and pervasive, and Roma communities have been marginalized socially and economically over recent years. Many Roma have been forced to seek livelihoods in marginal and informal activities, reinforcing a widespread perception among Hungary’s majority population and the police that the Roma minority is inherently criminal. There are frequent reports of police officers using violent and illegal methods against them.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Dr. Sándor Pinter
Minister of the Interior
Jozsef Attilau. 2-4
1051 Budapest
Hungary

Four of the six young people abused by the police

Photos: © AI

India

More than two years after her arrest Angammal continues to suffer mental and physical pain as a result of what happened in detention.

Bring those responsible for the torture of Angammal and her husband Guruviah to justice.

Angammal and Guruviah were arrested in July 1998 on suspicion of receiving stolen property. Police arrived at the couple's home in the Madurai district of Tamil Nadu in the early hours of the morning and found Angammal alone. They took her to the local police station and then to Oormechikulam police station, where she was made to spend the night with her hands tied behind her back. Guruviah was arrested the following morning. Both denied any knowledge of receiving the stolen property.

Their interrogation began on 28 July. Police officers tied the couple's hands behind their backs, made them face the wall, and beat them on their backs and buttocks with lathis (bamboo sticks).

The couple were transferred to yet another police station, where they were ordered to undress. They were led outside on a chain and beaten until Guruviah lost consciousness.

Back inside the police station, the couple were suspended from the roof of the building and beaten. When Angammal was taken down, she was thrown on the floor, still naked. Guruviah was told that Angammal would be "spoilt" in front of him, unless he confessed and revealed where the stolen jewellery was hidden. Angammal's breasts were bitten and she was kicked in the genitals. When Guruviah was taken down from the roof, the couple were made to simulate intercourse in front of several police officers.

Guruviah was taken to another police station, where police officers beat him, threw chilli powder in his eyes and pierced his fingernails, toenails and tongue with needles.

On 2 August 1998 the couple were taken to the Deputy Superintendent of Police. He was so shocked at their condition that he ordered their immediate admission to a private nursing home. Guruviah died of his injuries later that evening. Angammal was transferred the next day to a government hospital, where she remained for two weeks.

More than two years after her arrest Angammal continues to suffer mental and physical pain as a result of what happened in detention.

Angammal is still pursuing her case through the courts, trying to secure the prosecution of the police officers responsible for her husband's death. Several petitions are pending before the Tamil Nadu High Court, including a request that the investigation be taken out of the hands of the local police and transferred to the Crime Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department. Although Angammal has made a complaint to the State Human Rights Commission, the Commission has so far failed to respond.

Several attempts have been made to silence Angammal and to stop her from publicizing the case. In August 1998 she was offered Rs400,000 (US\$9,000) if she agreed not to speak to the Executive Magistrate who was conducting an inquiry into her husband's death. She refused the offer and made a full statement. In January 1999 Angammal was awarded Rs200,000 (US\$4,600) from the Tamil Nadu state government as compensation for Guruviah's death.

Deaths in custody continue to be widespread in all Indian states while access to justice for the victims of torture remains problematic.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Mr Karunanidhi
Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
Office of the Chief Minister
Chennai 600 022
Tamil Nadu
India

Police officers forcibly arresting a street vendor in New Delhi
Photos: (front panel) Angammal © private; (above) © New Statesman

Israel and the Occupied Territories

‘Omar Ghanimat, a Palestinian, was told by his Israeli interrogators that he would leave the detention centre ‘crazy or paralysed.’

Bring those responsible for the torture of ‘Omar Ghanimat to justice, and give him compensation and rehabilitation.

“On three occasions, while I was on the ground [one of my interrogators] grabbed the shackles on my legs and dragged me along the floor. [Another] kned me, breaking one of my ribs”

‘Omar Ghanimat

“... the methods used... complied with the approved interrogation ...procedures”

Department for the Investigation of Police Misconduct

‘Omar Ghanimat, a Palestinian, was told by his Israeli interrogators that he would leave the detention centre “crazy or paralysed”. He spent the first 48 hours of his interrogation hooded, in shabeh (see illustration). Over the weeks that followed he was often forced to hold excruciatingly painful positions. For example, he was forced to squat on his toes in gambaz, the “frog” position, for long periods. His interrogators shackled his hands so tightly that the blood supply to his fingers was cut off. They exposed him to extremely loud music and cold temperatures, and routinely deprived him of sleep.

Despite permanent damage to ‘Omar Ghanimat’s health, the Israeli authorities concluded that his treatment had not deviated from authorized procedures.

‘Omar Ghanimat was arrested at his home in Surif, Hebron, on 10 April 1997 by Israeli soldiers and members of the Israeli General Security Service (GSS). He was taken to the Jerusalem police district headquarters, where he was repeatedly interrogated by GSS officers and accused of belonging to ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, an armed wing of the Islamist group Hamas which opposes the peace process with Israel.

Allegra Pacheco, ‘Omar Ghanimat’s lawyer, made her first visit to the police headquarters in late May 1997. She immediately submitted a petition to the High Court to stop the use of torture. ‘Omar Ghanimat was present at the hearing, his injuries clearly visible. The High Court ordered the Department for Investigation of Police Misconduct to investigate the case, but the Department subsequently concluded that “... the methods used on the petitioner complied with the approved interrogation procedures and had received the approval of the duly authorized officials”. It recommended that no action be taken against the interrogators.

When ‘Omar Ghanimat was released in July 1997, he had lost 17 kilograms in weight. He was unable to sit on a chair and he had no sensation in his forearms. In November 1997 he underwent surgery to treat his left knee, damaged by being forced to kneel in gambaz. In one doctor’s opinion, he suffers from 10 per cent permanent disability as a result of torture.

Palestinians have long faced systematic torture and ill-treatment in detention centres in Israel and the Occupied Territories. This was officially sanctioned in 1987 by secret guidelines allowing the GSS to use “moderate” physical and psychological pressure. In September 1999 the High Court of Justice ruled that such interrogation methods were unlawful. However, Amnesty International continues to receive some reports of torture or ill-treatment.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Ehud Barak
Prime Minister and Minister of Defence
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street
Hakiryia
Jerusalem 91007

Drawing showing the torture method known as shabeh
Photo (front panel) © David Mizrahi, Ha'aretz; (drawing above) © David Gerstein, B'Tselem

Iran

Prison guards reportedly beat him until he was on the point of losing consciousness, saying that all he had to do was to blink to accept the charges against him.

Investigate the alleged torture of Akbar Mohammadi and bring those responsible to justice.

Akbar Mohammadi was arrested in Tehran in July 1999 during clashes between students and the security forces. He was initially held in incommunicado detention in Towhid under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Intelligence before being transferred to Evin prison in March 2000.

While in detention he was reportedly handcuffed, suspended by his arms, and whipped on the soles of his feet with electric cables. Prison guards reportedly beat him until he was on the point of losing consciousness, saying that all he had to do was to blink to accept the charges against him.

After being sentenced to death in a secret trial, Akbar Mohammadi wrote to the head of the judiciary, Mahmud Hashemi-Shahrudi, stating that while in detention he had been “violently beaten”; the letter was published in a number of Iranian newspapers.

According to reports, Akbar Mohammadi went on a hunger strike in protest at his detention and was said to be suffering from possible kidney failure. He was reportedly not allowed to receive hospital treatment despite referral to hospital by the prison doctor.

Akbar Mohammadi was one of hundreds of people arrested following violent clashes in Tehran in July 1999. The events leading up to the clashes began on 8 July with a peaceful demonstration by students who gathered outside their university dormitories to protest against the closure of the daily newspaper Salam. They were attacked by armed members of Ansar-e-Hezbollah, a militant group; members of the security forces at the scene took no action to protect the students.

Some hours later, members of the security forces and Ansar-e-Hezbollah forced their way into the student dormitories. At least one person died and hundreds were reportedly wounded. In the days that followed there was a dramatic increase in the scale of the demonstrations, the level of violence rose, and unrest spread to a number of provincial cities.

Brigadier General Farhad Nazari, commander of the security forces at the time, and 19 police officers were charged in connection with the storming of the student dormitories on 8 July 1999. In proceedings against them, which began in February 2000, several students gave evidence alleging that they had been brutally attacked by members of the police and by vigilante groups.

Akbar Mohammadi may have been targeted for arrest because of the connection with his brother, Manuchehr Mohammadi, who was accused of orchestrating the unrest and was later forced to “confess” to involvement with “counter-revolutionary agents” on Iranian state television.

Akbar Mohammadi was reportedly sentenced to death in September 1999 after a secret trial by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran whose procedures do not conform to international standards of fair trial. His sentence was reportedly upheld by the Supreme Court, but was subsequently commuted to 15 years’ imprisonment by order of the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

His Excellency
Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Akbar Mohammadi while studying in northern Iran in 1998.
Photos: © Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran

Kenya

The women were forced to strip and walk naked to the collection point for prison uniforms, in full view of other prisoners and jeering prison guards.

Investigate the treatment of Sophia Dolar, Pauline Wanjiru and Ester Wairimu and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

Sophia Dolar, Pauline Wanjiru and Ester Wairimu were arrested with other human rights activists in March 2000. During their ordeal they were threatened with beatings if they did not do as they were told.

They were taken by bus to Nakuru prison. During the journey, the human rights activists sang songs about rights, which annoyed the guards who shouted abuse at them when they got to the prison. As they arrived at the entrance to the women's section of the prison, the women were forced to strip and walk naked to the collection point for prison uniforms, in full view of other prisoners and jeering prison guards. The uniforms they were eventually given were filthy and tattered.

Each of the women was questioned separately for about an hour by four prison guards. If the women failed to address the prison guards as "madam" when replying to the questions, they were beaten with sticks.

The women were held in a large cell which already contained 39 women, many of whom were sick and suffering from diarrhoea; the quality of the prison food was extremely poor. Whenever a prison guard entered the room, the women were made to squat in rows. When the prisoners refused to eat one particular meal because the food had not been cooked properly, nine guards wielding canes came into the cell and beat them.

The prisoners slept either on the floor or on pieces of mattress, with four women sharing a single blanket. One woman held in these conditions was caring for her one-week-old baby. The prison was without water for four of the five days Sophia Dolar, Pauline Wanjiru and Ester Wairimu spent there. On the last day of their detention Sophia Dolar was forced to unblock a toilet without gloves or footwear and while wearing a large blanket which trailed in the overflowing sewage.

Conditions in many of Kenya's prisons are appalling; they have been described by a Kenyan High Court judge as "death chambers". Overcrowding, lack of basic sanitary requirements, and inadequate food, clothing and medical care have contributed to frighteningly high mortality rates. Amnesty International has repeatedly called for improvements to conditions in Kenya's prisons.

Sophia Dolar, Pauline Wanjiru and Ester Wairimu were charged with unlawful assembly and released on bail. The charges against the women and the other human rights activists were eventually dropped in May.

The women were part of a group of 11 human rights activists arrested on 30 March 2000 in Tinnet. The activists — members of the Kenya Human Rights Commission and of the 5Cs, the theatre group of the Citizens Coalition for Constitutional Change — had organized a week of cultural activities as part of a human rights and civic education program. For this they were accused by the authorities of threatening state security in the Tinnet area. Tinnet, part of the larger Mau Forest, is the ancestral home of the Ogiek people. It is the focus of a continuing land dispute between the government and members of the Ogiek indigenous community, some 5,000 of whom are threatened with eviction from the area.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

President Daniel arap Moi
Harambee Avenue
PO Box 30501
Nairobi
Kenya

Members of the 5Cs performing in front of a large audience
Photos: (front panel) © AI; (above) © Kenya Human Rights Commission

Laos

'I am seriously ill... I can't eat anything. I can't sleep. I am groaning with pain all the time.'
Feng Sakchittaphong

Release Feng Sakchittaphong and Latsami Khamphoui and ensure that they have access to the medical facilities they need.

Feng Sakchittaphong and Latsami Khamphoui are both suffering from angina and kidney problems, but they have no hope of receiving the medical attention they desperately need. Government officials and police officers have even confiscated medication which was sent to them by relatives. The two 60-year-old men have spent more than seven years at Prison Camp 7 in Houa Phan, a remote province in the northeast of the country, where conditions are extremely harsh. Contact with family members is tightly restricted and intervals between permitted visits have lasted for up to two years.

In March 1998 a letter from one of the prisoners reached Amnesty International. It was dated January 1998 and it stated: "...the dictatorial authorities are using schemes of incommunicado detention, including prohibitions on family visits and the total denial of all medical care... This overall situation is the reason why we have now fallen into double ill health and deterioration... On 11 January 1998 the Head of the Prison 7 came personally to inspect the poor state of our health. He thus knew the facts of how truly poorly we were... We then asked about our food ration, because for the past three or four months we had only low quality rice, and none of us would be able to withstand this any longer, this endless deprivation..."

Less than one month later, Thongsouk Saysangkhi, a friend and fellow prison inmate of Feng Sakchittaphong and Latsami Khamphoui, died. He too had suffered from angina and kidney problems.

Amnesty International had consistently warned the Lao authorities that the three men required urgent medical treatment. These warnings were ignored and Thongsouk Saysangkhi, a diabetic, was left to die without medication, contact with his relatives or adequate food. Government officials even refused to admit that Thongsouk Saysangkhi had died until several weeks after his death in February 1998.

Prisoners of conscience Feng Sakchittaphong, Latsami Khamphoui and Thongsouk Saysangkhi, all former government officials, were arrested in 1990 after they wrote letters advocating peaceful political and economic change in Laos. Amnesty International has repeatedly called for their immediate release. They were held in pre-trial detention for two years, spending some of that time in dark isolation cells.

In 1992, after unfair trials, they were convicted, sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment and transferred to Prison Camp 7 where they were held in a single prison cell which measured 6m x 6m. A gap between the bottom of the walls and the concrete floor allowed cold winds to enter the cell. They were made to sit in silence and were only permitted to leave the cell once a fortnight to bathe. They were threatened with beatings if they spoke to each other, and a prison guard was stationed at the door of the cell to enforce this rule. Even now they are held in darkness, except during mealtimes, and are only allowed to bathe once every one or two weeks. Conditions at the prison are so severe that they are recognized as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by the United Nations Committee against Torture.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

Somsavat Lengsavad
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
That Luang
Vientiane
Lao People's Democratic Republic

Photos: all © private; (front panel) Feng Sakchittaphong; (above) Thongsouk Saysangkhi; (back panel) Latsami Khamphoui, back panel: Feng, above: Thongsouk © Private

Sierra Leone

Mutilation and rape have been used systematically in a campaign of atrocities.

Ensure that those responsible for torture, including mutilations and rape, are brought to justice.

Mabinti, (not her real name) now aged 16, was abducted, repeatedly gang-raped and made pregnant by rebel forces. Her ordeal started after rebels attacked the village of Mamamah while retreating from the capital, Freetown, in January 1999. Her parents were killed in the raid and Mabinti was taken by the rebels, first to Lunsar and then to Makeni in Northern Province. "A number of the rebels gang-raped me many times. If I resisted rape, I was denied food and beaten. I was eventually forced to become the "wife" of one of the rebels – the same thing happened to many other girls." When she became pregnant, Mabinti was taken back to her village and abandoned. Not long after, in May 2000, her village was again attacked by rebel forces and she was forced to flee with her grandmother. They walked 40 kilometres before reaching an internally displaced people's camp.

Murder, abduction, mutilation and rape have been used systematically in a campaign of atrocities carried out by rebel forces against civilians during nine years of internal armed conflict. Groups aligned with the government and government forces have also carried out atrocities. The scale of rape and other forms of sexual abuse has been unprecedented: more than 90 per cent of women and girls abducted by rebel forces during the conflict are believed to have been raped. When rebel forces attacked Freetown in January 1999, more than 4,000 children were reported missing; a year later 2,000 of them, mostly girls, remained missing and were believed to have been abducted. Thousands of people were killed and hundreds of others maimed by having limbs deliberately cut off.

A peace agreement between the government and the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was signed in July 1999, and initially reduced the scale of abuses. The agreement, however, provided a blanket amnesty for crimes committed during the conflict between 1991 and July 1999 – including the rape of thousands of girls and women, the deliberate killing and mutilation of thousands of men, women and children, and countless other gross abuses of human rights. Large numbers of civilians who should have been released under the terms of the agreement remained held.

The previous pattern of abuses against civilians was quick to re-emerge: since October 1999 killings, mutilations, rapes and abductions by rebel forces have continued to be frequently reported. The capture of some 500 United Nations peace-keepers by rebel forces in early May 2000 and a subsequent resumption of hostilities has increased still further the threat to civilians of human rights abuses.

The amnesty provided by the peace agreement does not apply to abuses since July 1999, yet they continue to be committed with impunity. The Sierra Leone authorities, with the assistance of the international community, must ensure that all those responsible for human rights abuses, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, are held accountable and brought to justice.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Sierra Leonean refugees in Forécariah, Guinea, in January 2000. Some two million people, fleeing the violence, have become either refugees or internally displaced.

Photos: (front panel) A young girl whose hand was amputated by rebel forces in Freetown in January 1999. © Stuart Freedman; (above) © Clive Shirley

United States of America

Inmates have routinely been made to wear remote control electro-shock stun belts during visits with their lawyers.

Suspend the use of all electro-shock stun equipment pending a full inquiry into the uses and effects of such equipment. Ban stun belts now.

If he doesn't walk fast enough, he's been stunned by a [stun] gun.”
Mother of an inmate in Wallens Ridge State Prison, April 2000

Phillip Cordova alleges that on his first day at Wallens Ridge State Prison he was held in restraints while prison guards beat him and stunned him with an electro-shock stun gun. Perry Conner alleges that he was stun gunned up to 12 times and beaten in the groin area, causing him to lose control of his bowels.

Both men had been transferred from New Mexico to Wallens Ridge State Prison, one of Virginia's supermaximum security (“supermax”) prisons, in September 1999. Several inmates transferred from New Mexico to Wallens Ridge in 1999 alleged that they were tortured or ill-treated on arrival. They described how prison guards maintained a climate of fear and intimidation by, for example, using electro-shock devices arbitrarily or to punish inmates, depriving them of sleep, leaving them for prolonged periods in four-point “strap down” in punishment cells, and denying them adequate medical care.

Prisoners held in Red Onion State Prison, another “supermax” prison in Virginia, have alleged that guards have used electro-shock stun weapons to punish inmates for minor infractions of prison rules and for verbal insolence.

In both Wallens Ridge and Red Onion State Prisons, inmates have routinely been made to wear remote control electro-shock stun belts during visits with their lawyers or others. Allegations of racist abuse by an overwhelmingly white staff have also been levelled against both prisons.

Companies that market electro-shock weapons, including stun belts, stun shields, stun guns and tasers, claim that they are safe and non-lethal if used properly. Amnesty International is concerned, however, that such weapons, which can inflict severe pain at the touch of a button without necessarily leaving marks on the human body, are open to abuse and that they can be harmful or even lethal if used on people suffering from conditions such as heart disease. Stun weapons have been banned for law enforcement purposes in a number of countries, including Canada and most West European countries. However, they continue to be widely used in the USA.

More than 20,000 prisoners in the USA are being held in “supermax” facilities and the number is set to increase. In the most restrictive “supermax” units, prisoners are typically confined for between 23 and 24 hours a day in small, sometimes windowless, solitary cells with solid doors. They are given no work, training programs or daily exercise. These units are designed to minimize contact between staff and inmates, and prisoners are often subjected to regimes of extreme social isolation and reduced sensory stimulation. Studies have shown that prolonged isolation with reduced sensory stimulation can cause severe physical and psychological damage. However, mentally ill or disturbed prisoners continue to be held in “supermax” facilities in some states. The length of time inmates are assigned to “supermax” facilities varies, but many spend years in such units.

Amnesty International believes that conditions in many US “supermax” facilities are far more punitive than is required for legitimate security purposes and constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

In May 2000, the UN Committee against Torture expressed its concern about “the excessively harsh regime” of US supermax prisons and the use of electro-shock weapons. The Committee called on the USA to ban stun belts outright.

Take a step to stamp out torture

You can help stamp out torture. Add your voice to the Amnesty International campaign. Send the tear-off panel opposite, with your name and address on it, to:

The Honourable James Gilmore
Governor of Virginia
State Capitol
Richmond, VA 23219
USA

Red Onion Supermaximum Security Prison
Photos (front panel) A stun shield in a county sheriff’s office, 1999 © Eurovideo Productions; (above)
© Bristol Herald Courier/Jason Davis