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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Human rights information and web links for health professionals

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-----RECENT AI STATEMENTS & REPORTS

Uganda: Breaking the Circle - Protecting Human Rights in the Northern War Zone. The report describes a pattern of rapes, beatings and killings of unarmed civilians by government forces which have been largely obscured by the scale of violence from the armed opposition Lord's Resistance Army. It highlights weaknesses in the criminal justice system which delay trials of soldiers almost indefinitely and outlines the wider dynamic of human rights abuses in northern Uganda. For an AI news service [AFR 59/05/99, 17 March 1999] see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/15900599.htm> ; The full report [AI Index AFR 59/01/99, 17 March 1999] is available on AI Sweden's website: <http://www.amnesty.se/newscr.htm> [click on 'News services and country reports 1999 sorted by country or region' and scroll down to Uganda.

Nepal: Human Rights at a Turning Point? [AI Index: ASA 31/01/99, 15 March 1999]. Torture, abductions and political killings have been widespread since the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist) declared a "people's war" against the Nepalese government in February 1996. Following a research mission to Nepal, Amnesty International believes that only a fundamental change in direction by the key players in the conflict can prevent it from spinning out of control. For an AI news service [AI Index: ASA 31/06/99, 15 March 1999] see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/33100699.htm> ; the full report is available on AI Sweden's website: <http://www.amnesty.se/newscr.htm> [click on 'News services and country reports 1999 sorted by country or region' and scroll down to Nepal.

-----DEATH PENALTY NEWS

Sri Lanka: President Chandrika Kumaratunga's office said in a statement on 13 March that she will in future not exercise her executive authority to commute death sentences in Sri Lanka to life terms in jail. The statement said that "one of the stringent measures to be taken to arrest the present trend in crime is to follow a more stringent policy in the grant of the remission of sentences imposed by the court". Previously all condemned convicts were granted life sentences as a matter of routine and there has been no execution carried out in Sri Lanka since June 1976. The decision has met with mixed reactions from church leaders and senior judges in Sri Lanka. [AFP, 14 March 1999]

See <http://www.lacnet.org/suntimes/990314/frontm.html#1LABEL2>

United Nations: Asthma Jahangir, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and head of Pakistan's Human Rights Commission, called on states to establish a moratorium on the execution of death sentences with a view to abolishing capital punishment. Jahangir said she had written to 40 governments about the "violation of the right to life" of more than 2,300 people. [Reuters, 11 March 1999]

-----UN ADOPTS OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO CEDAW

After four years of negotiation, the 43rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women on 12 March 1999 adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, at the recommendation of its Working Group. It will be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for adoption in late 1999. Amnesty International welcomed the adoption of the Optional Protocol as a significant step forward towards the implementation of women's human rights but cautioned that it does not go far enough. For the AI news release [AI Index: IOR 51/01/99, 12 March 1999] see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/I5100199.htm> . For further information see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/protocol/adopted.htm>

-----BRAZIL RIGHTS GROUP HOPE TO BAR DOCTORS LINKED TO TORTURE

Brazilian medical associations began disciplinary proceedings on 3 March 1999 to strip the right to practice medicine from doctors who took part in the torture of political prisoners during the military dictatorship, which ended in the 1980s. The groups are seeking sanctions against 26 physicians who worked in military prisons between 1964 and 1985 and who are accused of violations ranging from the supervision of torture to the signing of autopsies that listed false causes of death for political prisoners. Some 400 Brazilian political prisoners reportedly died in custody under the military dictatorship, and surviving political prisoners filed about 8,000 formal complaints of torture.

See <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/318/7186/757/a> or

<http://www.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/news.world/brazil-doctors.html> [requires you to register]

#### -----NO LEGAL ACTION OVER RACAK KILLINGS

According to a report by the Serb state agency Tanjug on 10 March 1999, Serb police will not face legal action over the killing of 45 ethnic Albanians in the Kosovo village of Racak. Tanjug cited Serb doctors, who carried out the autopsies, as saying there was no trace of a massacre in the evidence they had gathered. [AFP, 10 March]

The report by the Finnish forensic team that assisted in the investigation and conducted 40 autopsies [see AI Bulletin no. 2, 22 January 1999] was handed over to European Union authorities on 17 March. Dr Helena Ranta who had lead the Finnish team said the killings were a crime against humanity but said it was not her team's role to answer the question of who committed the killings. [Reuters, 17 March 1999]. See

<http://search.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPlate/1999-03/17/151I-031799-idx.html>

#### -----MEDICAL DOCTOR ON TRIAL IN TURKEY

On 5 March 1999, Dr Cumhuri Akpınar, a medical doctor working at the Ankara branch of the Turkish State Forensic Medicine Institute and former executive member of the Ankara Medical Chamber, was conditionally released after his trial was postponed to 23 March 1999. Dr Akpınar had been detained since 15 January 1999 and charged with aiding an illegal organisation "via preparing forensic reports". The first two days of his trial were observed by WMA chair Anders Milton, a representative from Physicians for Human Rights, the Turkish Medical Association. Some 100 Turkish doctors also travelled to Ankara for the trial to express support for Dr Akpınar. For Amnesty International's latest action issued on behalf of Dr Akpınar see <http://www2.amnesty.se/isext99.nsf/b3ad7ab2f7211442412566ee00476b4e/d577b1f2d55046a1c12567360034754f?OpenDocument>

#### -----US PRISON POPULATION HITS RECORD HIGH

At midyear 1998, an estimated 1.8 million prisoners were held in State and Federal prisons or in local jails in the USA, an increase of 4.4% from 1997, the US Bureau of Justice Statistics said in a report on 15 March 1999. Overall the incarceration rate in the United States has more than doubled in the past 12 years. See <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/pjim98.htm> or, for a BBC report, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/americas/newsid\\_296000/296884.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/americas/newsid_296000/296884.stm)

#### -----TB IN RUSSIAN PRISONS

Dr Arata Kochi, chief of communicable disease prevention and control at the World Health Organization [WHO], said on 17 March 1999 that if TB was not controlled in Russian prisons it was going to spill over into Western Europe. Nearly one percent of Russia's population are in jail and held in small, overcrowded and dirty cells. WHO statistics put the figure of TB deaths at 25,000 in 1998, out of 120,000 to 200,000 people who caught the illness last year.

<http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9903/17/BC-RUSSIA-TUBERCULOSIS.reut/index.html>

WHO's TB site is at <http://www.who.int/gtb/>

#### -----ALLEGED SALE OF CHILDREN'S ORGANS IN EGYPT

Egypt's general prosecutor, Ragaa el-Arabi, has ordered an investigation into allegations that an organisation charged with caring for homeless children has been killing them and was selling body parts of children to privately-run hospitals. Similar allegations made in other countries have been regarded with great scepticism [see the Bellagio Task Force Report on Transplantation, Bodily Integrity, and the International Traffic in Organs, available at <http://www.icrc.org/> (search for Bellagio Task Force)].

See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle\\_east/newsid\\_298000/298063.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_298000/298063.stm)

#### -----MINISTER CALLS FOR SECURITY OF DOCTORS IN INDONESIA

Indonesia's Minister for Health Farid Anfasa Muluk has asked the country's defence ministry to step up security for paramedics and doctors in Ambon and Dili. Media reports had said earlier that doctors and paramedics sent in by the armed forces to replace health professionals who left after riots erupted had been "terrorized". Doctors in Dili staged a peaceful rally demanding more safety. [Antara news agency, Jakarta, 9 March 1999]

-----ISRAEL MOVES TO REIMPRISON MARCUS A KLINGBERG

According to articles in the Jerusalem Post and Ha'aretz on 8 March 1999, the State Attorney's Office in Israel has asked the country's Supreme Court to overturn a District Court decision that allowed convicted spy Marcus Klingberg to serve the remainder of his sentence in closely supervised house arrest. The Beer Shea District Court ruled in September 1998 that the ailing 80-year old Klingberg, who was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for espionage in 1983, could serve out the remaining four years of his sentence at home in Tel Aviv if he had a 24-hour Shin Bet-approved security guard. For almost ten years after his arrest, Professor Klingberg had been held in solitary confinement. See

<http://www3.haaretz.co.il/eng/scripts/article.asp?id=41894&wordd=klingsberg&mador=1&se=true&datee=3/16/99>

-----POSTGRADUATE TRAINING IN REFUGEE MEDICINE

The International Organisation for Migration [IOM] and the University of Pecs Medical School [UPMS] in Hungary are to create one of the first postgraduate courses in migrational medicine. The 1-year course, which is scheduled to start in the 4th quarter of 1999, will focus on the health needs of refugees, immigrants, and victims of civil war, and examine clinical and psychological aspects of treating such people and the international politics that affect them. The IOM is at <http://www.iom.int> and can be contacted at Tel: +41-22-7179111, Fax: 41-22-7986150, <mailto:info@iom.int>

-----TRANSLATION DATABASE FOR EASTERN-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

The Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry, a nonprofit organization based in the Netherlands which works to improve mental health care in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, has developed a translation database of Western medical literature which has been translated into Eastern European languages. The idea behind the database project is to avoid duplication of translations. For more information contact Alison Powers at <mailto:gip@geneva-initiative.org>

-----PINOCHET DECISION TO BE ANNOUNCED NEXT WEEK

A spokeswoman for the UK Law Lords announced on 17 March that the decision on whether the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet will have to face extradition proceedings will be announced on Wednesday, 24 March 1999 at 2pm [GMT]. See <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9903/17/BC-PINOCHET-BRITAIN.reut/index.html>

-----PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Welsh J. Japan: Prisoners wait for rights [Lancet, 1999: 353:922].

Despite a fairly low profile on human rights, wide-spread ill-treatment of detainees persists in Japanese prisons. Prisoners have been beaten, denied access to lawyers, held in long periods of solitary confinement and not provided with adequate medical care. Guards have wide discretion to apply punishments, and the secrecy surrounding the use of the death penalty which puts extraordinary stress on the prisoners on death row and their relatives has last year been condemned as inhumane by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. For an Amnesty International Health Professional Network Action see

<http://www2.amnesty.se/isext99.nsf/b3ad7ab2f7211442412566ee00476b4e/308de2128337bea1c12566f800554d5e?OpenDocument>

For an AI report [Japan: Abusive Punishment in Japanese Prisoners, AI Index: ASA 22/04/98, June 1998], see <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1998/ASA/32200498.htm>

Leaning J, Vollen L, Palmer C. Physicians for Human Rights documents systematic abuse against ethnic Albanian physicians and patients. [Lancet, 1999:353:921-2]

The US-based organization Physicians for Human Rights has carried out an investigation into a campaign of violence against ethnic Albanian health professionals in Kosovo. Findings from the first phase of investigations have now been released. PER is at <http://www.phrusa.org/> and can be contacted at <mailto:phrusa@phrusa.org>, Tel +1.617.695.0041, Fax +1.617.695.0307

Kumar S. Mental health problems in Kashmir on the increase [Lancet, 1999; 353:908].  
A new report by the Voluntary Health Association of India says that nearly a decade of clashes between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has seriously affected the physical and mental health of people in Kashmir. Overwhelming fear, uncertainty, and stress caused by the conflict has led to a ten-fold increase in psychiatric disorders, and an increasing number of children are also suffering post-traumatic stress disorders.

Tuberculosis progress report [Lancet, 1999:353/9157]. Series of articles.

The Lancet is available on-line at <http://www.thelancet.com> [full text for subscribers; partial access to non-subscribers]

International Committee of the Red Cross, World Health Organization. Guidelines for the Control of Tuberculosis in Prisons. Geneva: WHO; 1998:86pp. To order a copy of these guidelines please contact WHO, Marketing and Dissemination, <mailto:publications@who.org> , Tel: +41 22 791 24 76, Fax: +41 22 791 48 57 or from the ICC <mailto:webmaster.gva@icrc.org>, Fax: + 41 22 733 20 57.

Mann JM, Ruskin S, Groin MA, Annas GO. Health and Human Rights: A Reader. New York: Routledge, 1999:448pp. Visit the Routledge website at: <http://www.routledge-ny.com/support/normal/searchtop.html> and search using the ISBN number: 0415921023

Burns KR. The Forensic Anthropology Training Manual. New York: Prentice Hall, 1999. For details visit the Prentice Hall website at: <http://www.prenhall.com/search.html> (search for "Burns, KR")

Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. Torture in Egypt: Police Excesses and the Difficulty of Obtaining Evidence. Available at [http://www.omct.org/Members\\_reports/reports\\_of\\_the\\_members.htm](http://www.omct.org/Members_reports/reports_of_the_members.htm)

#### -----CONFERENCES

Third International Conference on Health and Human Rights, September 2000, Harvard University [Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA]. For details see <http://www.hri.ca/partners/fxbcenter/conferences/index.htm> ; to be put on the conference mailing list email your (postal) address to <mailto:fxbcenter@igc.apc.org> , or fax +1 617 432 4310

"Women in Palestine", Fourth International Conference at the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, 21-23 November 1999, Gaza [Palestine]. Topics will include "Women in the Political Struggle" and "Women and Human Rights". For more details contact Mr Husam El-Nounou, <mailto:pr@gcmhp.net> , Tel: + 972 7 2865949\_ Fax: + 972 7 2824072. See [http://www.gcmhp.net/conf\\_4th\\_a1.html](http://www.gcmhp.net/conf_4th_a1.html)

#### -----JOB VACANCY

A senior clinical or non-clinical lecturer/ lecturer in public health and humanitarian aid is being sought to lead a new collaborative project, funded by the Mellon Foundation and established by MERLIN (Medical Emergency Relief International) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The post-holder will work closely with MERLIN and other NGOs and donors. The job will also carry teaching, research management and networking responsibilities. Details of the post and how to apply are available from <mailto:personnel@lshtm.ac.uk> , phone +44 171-927.2203; fax +44 171-636.4771; quote AZ1

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