
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL NETWORK
Human rights information and web links for health professionals
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-----RECENT AI STATEMENTS & REPORTS

Malaysia: Human Rights Undermined - Restrictive Laws in a Parliamentary Democracy [AI Index: ASA 28/06/99, 1 September 1999]. This new report details how over many years, safeguards protecting human rights in Malaysia have been consistently weakened, and how vaguely worded security legislation is used to detain persons without charge or trial on account of their peaceful religious or political beliefs, some of whom have been ill-treated while held in incommunicado detention. For an AI news release [AI Index: ASA 28/07/99] see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/32800799.htm> ; the full report is available at <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1999/ASA/32800699.htm>

Israel: The Price of Principles: Imprisonment of Conscientious Objectors [AI Index: MDE 15/49/99, 2 September 1999]. The report urges the Israeli Government to recognize the right to refuse to perform military service for reasons of conscience, and calls on the authorities to stop prosecuting conscientious objectors under Israeli military law. For an AI news release [AI Index: MDE 15/67/99] see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/51506799.htm>]

-----DEATH PENALTY NEWS

United Nations: The UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on 24 August 1999 adopted a resolution 'condemn[ing] unequivocally the imposition and execution of the death penalty on those aged under 18 at the time of the commission of the offence' and calling for its abolition. The text of the resolution is at <http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0811fcbd0b9f6bd58025667300306dea/f091480a03ccf55a802567df003ea9f9?OpenDocument> ; a press release [including details on the discussion of the resolution] can be found at

<http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/68f5edab241a77858025660c00488585/88f034670a2523d4802567d80035cdd1?OpenDocument>

USA: On 31 August 1999, the jury at Justin Burrell's trial in Delaware [see Bulletin No. 17, 20 August 1999] found the 19-year-old guilty of reckless rather than intentional first-degree murder in the shooting of Dolly Ann Fenwick in May 1998, when he was 17 years old. Unless the judge overturns the jury's recommendation, Burrell will now be sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, but does not face the death penalty any longer. In addition to the cases listed in the last bulletin, the death penalty will now also be sought in North Carolina against Johnnie Lee McKnight, aged 19, who together with a co-defendant is accused of shooting three people at the age of 18; and Brett Blair Hollis, aged 19, who will stand trial in South Carolina charged with rape and murder committed in 1997 when he was 17 years old. On 1 September 1999, the jury at Gregory Wynn's trial in Alabama recommended that the 18-year-old, who was 17 when he killed, be sentenced to die in the electric chair. The judge who will sentence Greg Wynn at a hearing on 17 September now has the option of accepting the jury's recommendation or overriding it and passing a sentence of life imprisonment without parole.

USA, Utah: According to an article in the Deseret News on 31 August 1999, two people have been selected to administer the lethal IV that will be used in the October execution of Joseph Mitchell Parsons. Both executioners will be given syringes to carry out the execution, but only one will have the chemical mixture in it that will cause death, so that neither executioner will know who administered the lethal dose. The paper quoted Jack Ford, spokesman for the Utah Department of Corrections, as saying that the rules of the American Medical Association, which prohibit physicians from participating in an execution, 'force the prison to turn to paramedics or nurses'. See http://www.desnews.com/cgi-bin/libstory_reg?dn99&9908310135

Trinidad and Tobago: In an open letter to Attorney General [AG] Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Amnesty International responded on 26 August 1999 to recent comments made by the AG raising concern about campaigns against the death penalty in the Caribbean by human rights organizations. The text of the letter [AI Index: AMR 49/09/99] is available at <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/24900999.htm>

Iran: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on 1 September 1999 lashed out at the moderate newspaper 'Neshat' after it proposed abolishing the death penalty as well as Iran's vengeance laws as they were 'no solution to murder and corruption'. Khamenei said that any newspaper or writer 'wanting to renounce the fundamental principles of Islam or questioning the vengeance law [was] an apostate and liable to the death penalty'. [AFP, 1 September 1999]. 'Neshat' can be accessed [in Arabic] at <http://www.neshat.com/>

American Samoa: A parliamentarian in American Samoa on 23 August 1999 introduced a bill providing for lethal injection as method of execution. Currently the law provides for the death penalty as maximum penalty for first degree murder but does not stipulate an execution method, thus making it illegal for an execution to be actually carried out in American Samoa, a US territory. In April this year, Governor Tauese Sunia reportedly expressed his opposition to a law that would allow for the death penalty to be carried out.

-----SOUTH AFRICAN DOCTORS TAKE ACTION AGAINST UNETHICAL CONDUCT

According to a report in this week's British Medical Journal, several South African doctors are considering taking action to force South Africa's Health Professions Council to initiate an investigation into the conduct of the doctor who headed the apartheid government's chemical and biological warfare programme. Dr Wouter Basson, a cardiologist, is being tried for crimes associated with his role as head of the programme after he refused to give full testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and did not apply for amnesty. The South African Medical Association has initiated an investigation into his membership. [BMJ 1999;319:594 (4 September)]. See <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/319/7210/594> and, for background information, <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/news/98june1/11june-trc.html>

-----WHO COMMITTED TO ELIMINATING FGM

Thembi Tshabalala, WHO's regional director in Africa for family and reproductive health, said at a regional WHO meeting in Namibia this week that the World Health Organization was working with governments of 10 sub-Saharan countries to end female circumcision. Tshabalala said the WHO was also addressing the 'medicalisation' of the practice and said FGM was a human rights issue because 'no one has the right to mutilate someone else'. [AFP, 1 September 1999]. The homepage of the WHO's regional office for Africa can be found at <http://www.whoafr.org/> ; WHO's information page on FGM is at <http://www.who.int/frh-whd/topics/fgm.htm>

-----HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD SOLDIERING

A May 1999 statement on the 'Health implications of child soldiering' by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, of which Amnesty International is a member, can be found at <http://www.crin.org/fullweb.nsf/b54d4788d41141510025651500477601/a196354c5793bb78802567bb0055baf4?OpenDocument> ; the Coalition called on the World Health Assembly to put the issue on its agenda for the Year 2000 Assembly; and on the WHO to produce a full report on these issues for the Assembly and to fully cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other bodies and organizations.

-----TURKISH PRESIDENT VETOES AMNESTY LAW

Turkish President Suleyman Demirel on 1 September 1999 vetoed an amnesty law which had been passed by the Turkish parliament on 27 August 1999 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the republic. The amnesty would have pardoned common criminals such as members of organized crime syndicates and murderers, but excluded most offences, including political ones, committed 'against the state'. For example, the group of policemen convicted of torturing high school students accused of leftism in Manisa three years ago [see earlier bulletins] would have been pardoned, but not the students themselves. On 9 August 1999, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit had been quoted by the Turkish news agency Anatolia as saying that the Turkish authorities were 'definitely determined to prevent torture' and would be doing their 'outmost' to eliminate any legal shortcomings. [AFP, 2 September 1999, BBC World Service 9 August 1999].

-----ICRC STATUTE ONLINE

The corrected version of the statute of the International Criminal Court is now available at: <http://www.iccnw.org/html/icc19990712.html> (the initial version had a small number of drafting deficiencies which needed correction). Up-to-date information on signatures and ratifications of the statute can be found at <http://www.iccnw.org/html/countryindex.html>

-----AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN FRENCH

Information on and documents published by Amnesty International can be accessed in French via the homepage of AI's Editions Francophones [EFAI] at <http://www.iFrance.com/efai/FIRST.HTM> . EFAI can also be contacted at 17, rue du Pont aux Choux, 75003 Paris, France, Tel: +33.1.44.59.29.89, Fax: +33.1.44.59.29.80, <mailto:efai@calva.net> or <mailto:testefai@amnesty.org>

-----JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission [IGLHRC] is seeking to recruit an HIV Program Coordinator. The postholder, based in New York, will be responsible for conducting international advocacy on HIV issues; researching HIV- and AIDS-related violations and abuse; developing IGLHRC policies to address the right to health and related questions; and strategizing with and assisting local HIV and PWA groups. Deadline for applications: 15 October 1999. For more information contact Scott Long, Director of Policy at the IGLHRC, <mailto:scott@iglhc.org> , Tel: +1.212.216.1814, Fax: +1.212.216.1876.

-----PUBLICATIONS

Morgan R, Evans ME (eds). Protecting Prisoners - The Standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Context. Oxford University Press, 1999. UK price £50. For details see <http://www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-829821-8>

Denniston GC, Hodges FM, Milos MF (eds). Male and Female Circumcision: Medical, Legal, and Ethical Considerations in Pediatric Practice. Plenum Publishers, 1999. 547 pages, price US\$ 151. To order a copy contact NOCIRC, PO Box 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512 or contact <mailto:info@plenum.com> for more information.

McQuoid-Mason DJ, Dada MA. Guide to Forensic Medicine and Medical Law. Independent Medico-Legal Unit, University of Natal, South Africa, 1999. This book, divided into 8 modules, is aimed at providing a resource guide for the training of members of the medical profession, the legal profession, and the police and non-governmental organisations, and provides resource materials for workshop purposes. For more information or to order a copy contact the publishers at Innovation Centre, Francois Road, Durban 4001, South Africa. Tel: +27.31.260.1556, Fax: +27.31.260.1557, <mailto:pillemer@shep.und.ac.za>

Lindquist CH, Lindquist CA. Health behind bars: utilization and evaluation of medical care among jail inmates. Journal of Community Health 1999 Aug;24(4):285-303. An abstract is available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/htbin-post/Entrez/query?uid=10463472&form=6&db=m&Dopt=b>

Office for National Statistics. Non-fatal suicidal behaviour among prisoners. ONS, UK, 1999. ISBN 1 85774 329 6, UK price £15. The report presents the results from secondary analysis of the data on suicidal behaviour from the ONS survey on psychiatric morbidity among prisoners aged 16-64 in England and Wales. For more information and a summary of the findings see <http://www.ons.gov.uk/services/pblctns/nfsbap.htm>

Lancet, Letters: On 28 August 1999, Derek Summerfield from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture in London and Subhash C Arya from the Centre for Logistical Research and Innovation in Delhi responded to Richard Horton's earlier articles on the medicalisation of the experience of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The letters are available [to subscribers only] at <http://www.thelancet.com/newlancet/sub/issues/vol354no9180/body.correspondence771.html>

"The greatest obstacle to eradicating polio is not poverty or international indifference, but war" according to Mark Schoofs, writing in the New York Village Voice (25-31 August 1999). His

article on polio in the Democratic Republic of Congo can be found at:
<http://www.villagevoice.com/features/9934/schoofs.shtml>

Hamber B, Kibble S. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. This new 30-page report from the Catholic Institute for International Relations (London) reviews the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which it sees as "the most prominent of all truth commissions to emerge over the past 20 years". A summary is available at <http://www.ciir.org/cat/afribook.html#1852872179> .

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