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# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 1998**

## **Annual Report Summaries 1998**

**An overview of Amnesty International's Annual Report**

AI INDEX: POL 10/03/98

### **NOTE TO EDITORS:**

The following summaries provide an overview but do not detail all the human rights abuses in the Amnesty International report 1998. For full information, please refer to the report.

The following statistics on human rights violations and abuses in 1997 are based on information from the Amnesty International report 1998. The statistics include the number of countries in which human rights abuses took place but do not detail the numbers of victims.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WORLDWIDE DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1998**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 55 countries.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- In 31 countries, people “disappeared” in 1997 or remained “disappeared” from previous years.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 117 countries.
- In 41 countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody..

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 87 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- In 34 countries, political prisoners were behind bars after unfair trials in 1997.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 53 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 40 countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in at least 70 countries

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in 31 countries.

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# AFRICA

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1998 Covering events from January to December 1997

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In 1997, ongoing armed conflicts and further social and political unrest led to appalling human rights violations in Africa. There was little accountability for these abuses and the perpetrators continued to act with impunity.

Nevertheless, some positive steps were noted during the year. In **Mali**, all death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. In **Malawi**, all death sentences were commuted and the president pledged not to carry out any executions. In **South Africa**, further information on past human rights violations committed by security forces in the 1980s and the identification of secret graves emerged through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigations. Across Africa, the debate on the tragic impact of female genital mutilation became one of urgency and reflected widespread concern.

In the **Great Lakes Region**, mass killings were widespread and the human rights situation continued to worsen.

In **Rwanda**, the number of unlawful killings committed by soldiers and armed groups has dramatically escalated. Elderly people, women and young children were not spared during these attacks, while several employees of international organizations were deliberately killed. Amnesty International raised serious concerns about the fairness of the first trials of people accused of participation in the 1994 genocide. Meanwhile, over 130,000 people remained in prison. In **Burundi**, unfair political trials continued and led to more than 100 death sentences. Negotiations to end the conflict were repeatedly postponed; little progress has been made and massacres by soldiers and armed groups continued. While massacres of unarmed civilians, mostly Hutu refugees, by soldiers and armed groups, were reported in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the new government obstructed the United Nations investigation on massacres.

Thousands of civilians were killed often on ethnic grounds in **Congo**, in fighting between government troops allied with armed civilian militias and armed opposition groups. Fighting ended in October, when Denis Sassou Nguessou took power. However, serious human rights violations continued and many civilians were unlawfully killed. In **Liberia**, the need to address the issue of impunity became imperative after the peace agreement which ended seven years of civil war. Despite some improvements in human rights, many abuses continued. Samuel Dokie, former deputy speaker appeared to have been extrajudicially executed. Amnesty International stressed the necessity of accountability and of rebuilding institutions to uphold the rule of law and international human rights standards.

In **Sierra Leone**, the rule of law completely collapsed after a military coup on 25 May. The government was to be reinstated in early 1998 after the intervention of a Nigerian-led peace-keeping force (ECOMOG). Hundreds of people were arbitrarily arrested and detained; many were tortured and ill-treated. In **Somalia**, since the collapse of the state in 1991 the rule of law has not been re-established. In the context of the extension of state administration in **Angola** to areas formerly controlled by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), both the government and UNITA carried out deliberate and arbitrary killings. In urban areas the police tortured and killed suspected criminals. UNITA detained suspected internal dissidents in areas it controlled.

In Casamance, **Senegal**, arbitrary arrests and torture committed by soldiers and armed opposition groups became a way of dealing with the political conflict, and the phenomenon of unlawful killings resumed since July. In **Mozambique** police tortured dozens of criminal suspects. Few cases were thoroughly investigated. In **Sudan**, anti-government demonstrators were frequently beaten. At least two detainees died after being tortured. Sentences of flogging were common for offences against “public order” or “public decency”. In December, 25 female demonstrators received 10 lashes each.

In 14 countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody. In **South Africa**, more than 100 deaths in custody were reported. In **Nigeria**, virtually non-existent medical care and harsh conditions in prisons resulted in a high mortality rate. The government failed to investigate the death of two prisoners of conscience, including a former Deputy Head of State retired Major-General Shehu Musa Yar’Adua. In **Uganda**, 60 prisoners died from harsh prison conditions; widespread torture and ill-treatment led to the death of at least seven others.

Freedom of expression and association were seriously curtailed, and in 27 countries confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held.

In **Nigeria**, hundreds of prisoners of conscience, including dozens of journalists and human rights activists, were arrested. Some have been detained for months, incommunicado and without charge or trial. Many were beaten. The security police broke up public gatherings organized by human rights or pro-democracy groups. In **Cameroon**, hundreds of critics and opponents of the government, including members and supporters of opposition political parties, were harassed, imprisoned and tortured. At least eight people died as a result of torture. In **Kenya**, police officers violently broke up peaceful rallies calling for reform. Human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists and journalists were injured and at least 14 died. Dozen of journalists in **Ethiopia** were arrested, as well as hundreds of critics and opponents of the government. In **Chad**, security forces issued death threats to some human rights defenders.

Executions were carried out in nine countries. In **Cameroon**, the first execution was carried out since 1988. In **Burundi**, for the first time since 1981, six people were executed. In **Nigeria**, at least 43 prisoners were sentenced to death and 33 executed. At least 74 people were sentenced to death in **Kenya**, and more than 750 people remained under sentence of death. In **Uganda**, more than 1,000 prisoners were under sentence of death.

Armed opposition groups committed in 12 countries serious abuses such as deliberate and arbitrary killings, torture including rape, and abduction. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a **Ugandan** armed opposition group armed and supplied by the Sudanese authorities, abducted

hundreds of Ugandan Children and held them in bases in **Sudan**. They were ill-treated and forced to kill civilians and captured soldiers. Hundreds of abducted girls were raped in forced marriages.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN AFRICA DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1998**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 21 countries in the region.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- In eight countries, people “disappeared” in 1997 or remained “disappeared” from previous years.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 31 countries in the region.
- In 14 countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 27 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- In eight countries, political prisoners were behind bars after unfair trials in 1997.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 20 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in nine countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 16 countries

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in 12 countries.

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# AMERICAS

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1998 Covering events from January to December 1997

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Widespread and endemic impunity continued to hinder the path towards a new future for human rights in the Americas. Cases of torture, ill-treatment, “disappearances” and extrajudicial executions were regularly reported throughout the region, and human rights defenders and journalists denouncing these and other abuses often became victims themselves.

In **Argentina**, an increase in abuses by police often resulted in serious injuries or death, highlighting the discrepancy between the legal provisions for prevention and punishment of torture and the reality: a pattern of police obstruction of judicial investigations into complaints, and long delays in completing such investigations.

Some positive developments took place in **Brazil** in March when the crime of torture -- widespread in the country -- was inserted into the penal code. Legislative bills were also under discussion which, if implemented, could reduce impunity through reforms of the police, the criminal justice system and the judiciary, and the creation of a federal witness protection program. However, the number of fatal shootings by police in Rio de Janeiro state continued to rise following the state’s decision to offer large pay rises to police for “acts of bravery and fearlessness”. Throughout **Brazil**, hundreds of people were killed by police and death squads linked to the security forces in circumstances suggesting extrajudicial executions.

The death toll was also very high in **Colombia**, where hundreds were similarly killed by the security forces and paramilitary groups operating with their support or acquiescence. In September, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions visited the **USA**, where abuses reported included shootings in disputed circumstances.

In the **USA**, there were reports of torture and ill-treatment by police and prison officers, sometimes resulting in deaths in custody. Sentences of corporal punishment were recorded in some Caribbean countries, including **Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica** and the **Bahamas**.

On the issue of “disappearances” in the region, legal initiatives taken in other countries to establish the fate of “disappeared” nationals in **Argentina** in the between 1976 and 1983 continued, with the Argentine authorities refusing to cooperate with Spanish court proceedings. Ongoing investigations of “disappearances” in previous years were also monitored in **Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico**, and **Paraguay**, while new cases were denounced in **Colombia** and **Mexico**.

In **Colombia**, at least 140 people “disappeared” after detention by the security forces or paramilitary groups, and “death squad” style killings of people regarded as “disposable” continued in urban areas. In **Mexico**, at least 30 people disappeared following detention, mostly in the context of anti-narcotics and counter-insurgency operations. Most were tortured and then released following campaigns on their behalf, but at least 10 remained “disappeared”.

Prison conditions remained extremely harsh throughout the region, including in **Guyana, Jamaica, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela**, often amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In **Peru**, conditions in the maximum security prisons holding people accused of terrorism were especially harsh, while in **Venezuela**, serious overcrowding, insanitary conditions and inadequate medical care led to dozens of protests by inmates, hunger strikes, violence and scores of deaths. Similar problems also led to riots in **Honduras**, causing at least two deaths. In the **USA**, there were complaints by women inmates of rape and sexual assault, as well as allegations in several prisons of beatings, abusive use of restraints, and use of stun guns.

Throughout the year, Amnesty International expressed concern to governments in the region about renewed attacks and threats against journalists and human rights defenders. In **Argentina**, at least 30 journalists were subjected to attacks, repeated death threats and intimidation. Information received in several cases indicated the possible involvement or acquiescence of the security forces.

In **Chile**, human rights defenders attempting to uncover past violations committed under the military government also received death threats, while in **Colombia** at least 10 human rights activists were killed. In **Mexico**, scores of human rights defenders and journalists investigating human rights violations or corruption received death threats, with the Mexican authorities consistently failing to act. Foreign human rights monitors faced restrictions on their work, and even expulsion from the country on charges of having infringed immigration laws.

Seventy-four people were executed in the **USA** -- the highest number since 1955 -- bringing the total number of those executed since the end of the moratorium on the death penalty in 1977 to 432 people. Of 62 foreigners on death-row in the USA, most were effectively denied access to consular assistance, in violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

In an unprecedented and worrying move that could undermine international mechanisms for the redress of human rights violations, **Jamaica** withdrew as a State Party from the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UN Human Rights Committee stated that time limits imposed by the Jamaican Government on petitions by death-row prisoners to the Committee and to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights could not be invoked to justify executions while prisoners' petitions were pending.

Two people were executed in **Guyana**, while in **Chile** a bill calling for the abolition of the death penalty was rejected by the Senate. By contrast, in some positive moves, **Colombia** acceded to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty; **Bolivia** adopted a new penal code removing this penalty for certain crimes -- thus bringing penal laws into line with the country's Constitution, which does not provide for the death penalty -- and **El Salvador** decided not to pursue the reintroduction of capital punishment.

Hundreds of prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience remained imprisoned in the region. In **Cuba**, the authorities justified suppression of political dissent on the grounds of persistent hostility from the USA government, and continued to deny the UN Special Rapporteur on Cuba access to the country. Given the severe restrictions on human rights monitoring, the number of political prisoners was difficult to estimate; nevertheless, several hundred prisoners of conscience were believed to be imprisoned.

In **Peru**, the mandate of the *ad hoc* Commission charged with recommending presidential pardons for prisoners falsely accused of terrorism was extended to August 1998. At least 3,000 prisoners accused of terrorism charges were serving sentences or awaited trial under procedures

which fell well short of international standards, and at least 550 possible prisoners of conscience and 34 prisoners of conscience -- all accused of terrorism -- remained in prison.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE AMERICAS DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1998**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 15 countries in the region.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- In four countries, people “disappeared” in 1997 or remained “disappeared” from previous years.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 20 countries in the region.
- In five countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in seven countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- In four countries, political prisoners were behind bars after unfair trials in 1997.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in five countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in two countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in eight countries

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in two countries.
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# ASIA/PACIFIC

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1998 Covering events from January to December 1997

In the 50th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, challenges to the universality and indivisibility of human rights were prevalent throughout the Asia Pacific region. Amnesty International was particularly concerned about the effects the economic crisis in many countries could have on human rights. Economically disadvantaged groups, migrant labourers, and ethnic minority groups all faced the consequences of political and economic instability.

Workers in **China** protesting against corruption were injured by police and many were arrested. In **Viet Nam**, a newspaper editor was detained without trial for writing an article alleging official corruption. In **Indonesia**, independent trade union activist Muchtar Pakpahan began serving a four-year prison sentence for his peaceful activities, while also facing a separate trial for subversion, and 26 people were detained for three days for organizing a labour rights workshop. In **South Korea**, where more than 650 political prisoners were arrested under National Security legislation, the government issued arrest warrants on trade union leaders following demonstrations against new labour legislation.

Hundreds of peaceful protesters, many of them women, were detained, harassed and ill-treated in **India** for demonstrating against the construction of a power plant. In **Malaysia**, members of the Dayak Iban indigenous community were detained over protests about land rights, and the trial continued of the director of a non-governmental organization after she published a report detailing ill-treatment in migrant labour camps. The **Malaysian** government also used the repressive Internal Security Act against religious activists and threatened to use it against currency speculators. **Singapore** government leaders brought civil suits against two members of an opposition political party – apparently to try to force them out of politics by bankrupting them.

The human rights catastrophe continued for a third successive year in **North Korea** with severe food shortages, and some estimates of several thousand children dying every month as a result – leading to a total of more than two million deaths in the last three years – but the authorities' refusal to allow adequate monitoring hampered accurate evaluation.

For all their talk about Asian values and respecting cultural differences, governments continued to oppress minority groups. Brutal repression of ethnic minorities seeking religious freedom or independence continued in **China**, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet. The **Myanmar** military were responsible for extrajudicial killings, forcible relocations and torture of ethnic minorities.

In **Pakistan**, police were allegedly involved in a violent attack on a Christian community in Punjab, and trials were instigated against members of religious minorities. The **Bhutan** government detained around 150 possible prisoners of conscience, many of whom were members of the Sarchop community. Thousands of people were reportedly detained because of their ethnicity or “un-Islamic” behaviour in **Afghanistan**, where torture and ill-treatment were widespread. Tens of thousands of women remained physically restricted to their homes by Taleban edicts.

Refugees fleeing persecution suffered doubly at the hands of Asian governments, many in direct contravention of international standards. Refugees arriving in **Australia** without visa or travel documents were automatically – and arbitrarily – detained while their asylum claims were assessed. Around 400 Rohingya refugees were forcibly repatriated to **Myanmar** from camps in **Bangladesh**, while the government of **Thailand** sent more than 6,000 refugees back to **Myanmar**, and refused asylum seekers an opportunity to challenge their detention. In the **Maldives**, 17 Turkish asylum seekers were held in appalling conditions and had to drink sea water. Foreign nationals detained in **Japan** were severely ill-treated and denied medical care, and one died in suspicious circumstances.

Unarmed civilians bore the brunt of ongoing armed conflicts throughout the region, with hundreds killed in massacres and deliberate attacks by various armed groups in **Afghanistan**. In **Cambodia**, at least 16 people were killed in a grenade attack on a peaceful opposition demonstration in March, and government forces deliberately killed more than 43 suspected opposition supporters following the July coup. Many unarmed civilians were killed in fighting between government forces and armed opposition groups in various parts of **India**.

Renewed fighting in **Myanmar** resulted in tens of thousands of Karen and Shan refugees fleeing to Thailand to escape brutal ill-treatment and forced portering for the army. In a low-level conflict in **Nepal**, around 700 people suspected of involvement in a “people’s war” were jailed without trial, and the armed opposition group was responsible for at least 18 deliberate and arbitrary killings.

Hundreds of extrajudicial executions and “disappearances” on Bougainville, **Papua New Guinea**, remained uninvestigated despite moves towards a peaceful resolution to conflict. Thousands of Tamil people, including scores of possible prisoners of conscience, were arrested in **Sri Lanka**, where both the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam armed opposition group were responsible for grave human rights abuses – in particular Amnesty International documented approximately 80 “disappearances” during 1997. In August, the **Pakistani** government passed sweeping legislation giving police powers to use lethal force against anyone suspected of “committing, or believed to be about to commit, a terrorist offence”, and at least 50 extrajudicial executions were reported.

Governments using repressive legislation to intimidate opponents were common throughout the region, with thousands of political prisoners, including human rights defenders, in jail in **India**, where at least 300 are reported to have died in custody. The **Indonesian** government held at least 300 prisoners of conscience in jail – many of them peaceful political opponents – and torture of detainees was commonplace. The **Myanmar** government held more than 1,200 political prisoners, and intimidated opponents using short-term detentions. Hundreds of political prisoners were detained without charge or trial in **Pakistan**, and many more received unfair trials. Torture, including rape, was widespread throughout the country.

Some governments actively challenged the UDHR and other international human rights treaties. **Australia** moved to introduce legislation effectively allowing the authorities to disregard any human rights treaty previously ratified by the government, and refused to accept a binding clause on respect for “basic human rights as proclaimed in the UDHR” in an European Union “Framework Agreement”. The **North Korean** government announced that it was withdrawing from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Going against United Nations moves towards abolition, the **Philippine** government held at least 450 people under sentence of death and cleared the way for a first possible execution in 1998, amid serious concerns about police using torture to extract confessions. The use of the death penalty also increased markedly in **Taiwan**.

However, there were some positive changes in the region, such as moves in **Bangladesh, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Nepal** and **Thailand** towards establishing national human rights commissions. In **China**, the government signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and abolished the death penalty for juveniles. Also in **China**, well-known dissident Wei Jingsheng was freed on medical parole, following other releases. In **India**, the government signed the UN Convention against Torture. Kim Dae Jung, a former prisoner of conscience, was elected as President of **South Korea** in December, promising the release of political prisoners and human rights reforms. The **Sri Lankan** government announced it would take action against members of the security forces involved in “disappearances” in previous years, and **Thailand** adopted a new constitution with strong human rights provisions.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ASIA/PACIFIC DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1998**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 11 countries in the region.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- In five countries, people “disappeared” in 1997 or remained “disappeared” from previous years.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in at least 22 countries in the region.
- In 11 countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 18 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- In three countries, political prisoners were behind bars after unfair trials in 1997. In many more, prisoners remained in imprisoned after unfair trials in previous years.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 12 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 12 countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 15 countries

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in nine countries.

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# EUROPE

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1998 Covering events from January to December 1997

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Torture and ill-treatment by security forces, police or state authorities continued to be the most widely reported human rights violations in the Europe region. Cases were recorded in 28 countries with people believed to have died as a result of these violations in at least five.

In January and February people were detained and ill-treated in **Albania** by uniformed or plain-clothes police officers, or civilians operating in groups linked to the authorities, during anti-government demonstrations against fraudulent saving schemes. Hundreds of people – mostly ethnic Albanians – were also tortured or ill-treated by police in **Macedonia** following protests in July. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees was also said to be widespread in **Belarus**, where the practice of *press-camera* (using prisoners to control and ill-treat other prisoners) is commonplace in prisons and detention centres. In **Belgium** and **Italy**, there were new allegations that members of the armed forces tortured and ill-treated Somalis in 1993, during the United Nations peace-keeping operations in Somalia. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed alarm at the failure by the authorities in **Bulgaria** to investigate cases of harassment and ill-treatment against ethnic minorities, particularly Roma.

In a positive move in October, President Yeltsin signed a decree which, following recommendations by the Council of Europe and the UN Committee against Torture, envisaged step-by-step reform of the penitentiary system in the **Russian Federation**, where cases of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officers and in the military are regularly reported. In **Turkey**, torture continued to be widespread in police stations and gendarmeries, although a new law shortening the maximum terms of police detention from 30 to 10 days in provinces under state of emergency legislation had some impact. The reforms still failed to meet international standards by permitting the practice of incommunicado detention, widely recognized as being conducive to torture, to continue.

In **France**, there were continued reports of fatal shootings, ill-treatment and rape by law enforcement officers. A number of those accused of such offences in previous years were, after long delays, brought to trial. They were acquitted or sentenced to only nominal terms of imprisonment. In **Germany** there was further evidence of police ill-treatment of foreigners, including asylum-seekers, and members of ethnic minorities. In the **United Kingdom**, inquests into deaths in custody revealed that certain methods of restraint used by law enforcement officers led to deaths of prisoners.

Prison conditions amounting to ill-treatment continued to be reported in some countries including the **Russian Federation**, where for instance, the Procurator General expressed concern at serious overcrowding and revealed that 2,000 people had died of tuberculosis in prisons in 1996 – a death rate 10 times higher than in the general population. In the **United Kingdom**, independent medical reports indicated that conditions in Special Security Units led to a serious deterioration of prisoners' physical and psychological health.

Cases of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners were also widely reported throughout the region. In **Azerbaijan**, groups of political prisoners were convicted in proceedings that reportedly fell short of international standards, since testimony allegedly extracted under duress was allowed into evidence. In **Greece** about 250 conscientious objectors to military service on religious grounds were

imprisoned. Nevertheless, in a positive development the Greek Parliament adopted in June a new law on conscription which includes a provision for alternative civilian service. The length of the alternative civilian service, however, remains punitive, being 18 months longer than military service.

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At least five people were reportedly “disappeared” in security force custody in **Turkey** and at least 20 were killed in circumstances suggesting that they had been extrajudicially executed. In **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, the whereabouts of more than 19,000 people, many of whom had “disappeared” in the custody of the police or armed forces, remained unknown. Of more than 2,000 people still missing as a result of the armed conflict in **Croatia**, many were believed to have “disappeared”. On the other hand, hundreds of cases were resolved – primarily through the identification of bodies exhumed from mass graves by the Croatian authorities or the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Some positive developments regarding the death penalty included the commutation of all death sentences and the abolition of this punishment for all crimes in **Georgia**, and the official announcement of a moratorium on executions in **Azerbaijan** – where at least 16 death sentences had been passed during the year. In **Belarus**, on the other hand, at least 30 people were executed, and the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern at the high number of executions, as well as the number of crimes for which capital punishment is applicable. Twenty-six executions were reported in **Kyrgyzstan**, but in October President Akayev signed into law a new criminal code reducing the number of crimes which carry the death penalty. In the **Russian Federation**, where at least 846 people remained under sentence of death, President Yeltsin reportedly instructed the government to take steps towards abolition. Thirteen people were executed in **Ukraine** and more than 260 remained under sentence of death, leading the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to adopt a resolution in January condemning continuing executions and threatening the country with expulsion should more be carried out.

Amnesty International expressed concern throughout the year at human rights abuses by armed opposition groups in three European countries. In **Spain**, the armed Basque group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) continued to commit human rights abuses against both security forces and civilians, and was widely believed to be responsible for 13 killings – a significant increase on the previous year. Armed separatist, leftist and Islamist organizations in **Turkey** were responsible for at least 13 deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians and prisoners. In the **United Kingdom**, 15 civilians were killed by members of armed political groups in Northern Ireland, who were also responsible for 150 “punishment” shootings and at least 72 “punishment” beatings of members of their own communities.

The forcible return from **Turkey** to their country of origin of recognized refugees and asylum-seekers, including Iraqi and Iranian nationals, continued throughout the year. Asylum-seekers in the **Russian Federation** continued to be detained in contravention of international standards, to be denied access to asylum procedures and to face possible forced repatriation to countries where they might be subjected to human rights violations. Approximately 1.4 million people from **Bosnia-Herzegovina** remained refugees or internally displaced because it was still not safe for them to return to their homes or due to bureaucratic obstacles.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EUROPE  
DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S  
ANNUAL REPORT 1998**

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## **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in three countries in the region.

## **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- In five countries, people “disappeared” in 1997 or remained “disappeared” from previous years.

## **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 28 countries in the region.
- In five countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody.

## **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 17 countries.

## **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- In six countries, political prisoners were behind bars after unfair trials in 1997.

## **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in five countries.

## **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in seven countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 14 countries

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in three countries.

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# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1998 Covering events from January to December 1997

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In 1997 hundreds of cases of unfair trials of political prisoners were recorded in most countries in the Middle East and North Africa, while hundreds of other political detainees continued to be held years after their arrest without charge or trial. Torture remained widespread and in some countries systematic, and the number of executions recorded by Amnesty International increased significantly.

Some positive steps were reported during the year. For example in **Egypt**, the Supreme Administrative Court upheld the decree banning female genital mutilation from being carried out in state hospitals, and **Saudi Arabia** acceded to the United Nations Convention against Torture with limiting reservations, and to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

In **Algeria** 1997 saw some of the worst violence against civilians since the beginning of the conflict in 1992. In rural areas, armed groups massacred thousands of men, women and children with unspeakable brutality. Killings often went on for several hours in villages close to army barracks, but the army and the security forces failed to intervene to stop the killings and the assailants were allowed to flee undisturbed on each occasion. Security forces were responsible for extrajudicial executions, torture and "disappearances", and state-armed militias committed deliberate and arbitrary killings and other abuses against civilians. For their part, armed groups defining themselves as "Islamic groups" continued to kill, torture, abduct and threaten civilians with death.

In October Amnesty International, together with other human rights organizations, issued an appeal calling for an international investigation to be set up into the human rights situation in Algeria.

International fair trial standards were routinely disregarded in countries such as **Bahrain** and **Saudi Arabia**, where secret proceedings and the absence of legal counsel were the norm. In **Lebanon**, scores of civilians were summarily tried by military courts. In **Syria**, dozens of people were arrested on political grounds, while hundreds of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, remained held since the 1980s. In **Kuwait**, more than 120 people continued to serve prison terms after unfair trials since 1991.

In **Iran**, followers of certain Shi'a clerics, as well as hundreds of political opponents, writers, journalists and intellectuals were imprisoned following unfair trials, and some were held without trial. In **Egypt**, thousands of suspected members or sympathisers of banned Islamist groups remained held without charge or trial some for several years, and hundreds of tenant farmers opposed to a new agricultural law were arrested. In **Israel and the Occupied Territories**, hundreds of Palestinians were arrested on security grounds, at least 460 of them were administratively detained without charge or trial. At least 150 Lebanese nationals remained held without charge or

trial for up to 12 years in **Khiam** detention centre in South Lebanon which is run by the South Lebanon Army (SLA), a Lebanese pro-Israeli militia.

Torture and ill-treatment continued to be reported in 16 countries. In **Egypt**, it remained systematic in State Security Investigations (SSI) buildings, police stations and sometimes in prisons. In **Tunisia**, dozen of wives and relatives of imprisoned or exiled supporters of the Islamist movement *Al-Nahda* reported being ill-treated, threatened with torture, including rape, and asked to divorce their husbands; human rights defenders were increasingly targeted. The UN Committee against Torture stated that certain methods of interrogation used by **Israel** constituted torture. In the areas under the jurisdiction of the **Palestinian Authority**, at least three detainees died in custody apparently as a result of torture. Forty Indian children were reportedly tortured or ill-treated in the custody of police in Jeddah, **Saudi Arabia**.

Cruel and inhuman judicial punishments, such as amputations, flogging and stoning were widely imposed in various countries in the Gulf, including **Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates** and **Yemen**. In **Ras al-Khaimah (United Arab Emirates)**, a Sri Lankan woman and an Indian man were reportedly sentenced to 130 and 90 lashes respectively. The punishment of flogging was extended to traffic offences and reportedly to begging.

The number of death sentences, often passed after unfair trials, remained high in 1997, while executions recorded by Amnesty International increased significantly. There were at least 122 executions in **Saudi Arabia**, many of the victims being migrant workers sentenced after grossly unfair trials conducted in secret in the absence of any defence lawyer. In **Iran**, at least 143 executions were reported, some by stoning. In **Yemen**, two people were executed and crucified . In **Dubai (UAE)**, three Indian nationals were executed by firing-squad. At least eight people were executed in **Libya**.

In **Iraq**, hundreds of convicted political and common law prisoners were reportedly executed in Abu Ghraib and Radhwaniya Prisons near Baghdad, and tens of thousands of suspected opponents arrested in previous years continued to be held. The fate of thousands of people who “disappeared” in previous years remained unknown.

In **Egypt**, armed Islamist groups were responsible for arbitrary killings of at least 100 unarmed civilians, mostly foreign tourists. Kurdish groups allegedly committed serious human rights abuses, including killings and rape, in **Iraqi Kurdistan**. In **Israel**, at least 29 civilians were deliberately and arbitrarily killed by Palestinian armed groups opposed to the peace process.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST  
AND NORTH AFRICA  
DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S  
ANNUAL REPORT 1998**

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**EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in five countries in the region.

**“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- In nine countries, people “disappeared” in 1997 or remained “disappeared” from previous years.

**TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 16 countries in the region.
- In six countries, torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody.

**PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 18 countries.

**UNFAIR TRIALS**

- In 13 countries, political prisoners were behind bars after unfair trials in 1997.

**DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 11 countries.

**DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 10 countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 15 countries

**HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in five countries.