
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 88/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 29 JULY 1993

AI INDEX: NWS 11/88/93
DISTR: SC/PO
NO OF WORDS: 965

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: External - ICM, Bangladesh

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 14 September

News release to go with document on religious intolerance.

Sudan - 29 September

News release to go with document on human rights violations in war zone.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Laos - 9 August

Correction - Limited News Service item embargoed for 9 August to go with document and SEAMRAN sent in News Service 87.

Georgia - 10 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 83

North Korea - 23 September

Targeted News Service item to go with document on POCs, political prisoners and "disappearances". IS Press Office will send to international media.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Myanmar - 6 October (International)

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October (International)

Venezuela - 10 November (International, linked to EJEs & Disappearances)

AI INDEX: ORG 50/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL

**MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, JULY 30, 1993**

**Contact: Joshua Rubenstein (617) 623-0202 ABOUT THE ICM
Anita Tiessen (617) 496-2000 ABOUT THE ICM (From 5 August)
Ashanti Chimurenga (312) 427-2060 ABOUT THE TRIBUNAL
Enid Harlow (212) 633-4265 ABOUT THE TRIBUNAL**

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA TO CONVENE A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE USA AS PART OF THE PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES AT THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

New York, NY - Amnesty International USA announced today that it has assembled a distinguished group of internationally renowned human rights jurists, activists and scholars to hold a commission of inquiry on the use of the death penalty in the United States.

The commission, which will take place at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel's Terrace Room (64 Arlington Street) on Friday, August 6 from 9 am to 5:30 pm and Saturday August 7, 1993, from 10 am to 1 pm, is to consider such issues as innocence, mental retardation and racism and the death penalty. Jurists will hear testimony from witnesses, hold deliberations and present conclusions.

Among the jurists are: Gitobu Imanyara, Kenyan human rights attorney; Roger Hood, Director of Center for Criminological Research at Oxford University; Belsario Dos Santos, Brazilian Bar Association; Lloyd Barnett, President, Jamaican Bar Association.

Witnesses will include: William Schabas, Professor of Law, University of Quebec; Walter McMillan, former death row inmate; Rev. Fred Taylor, Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Barbara Frey, Minnesota Advocates Committee; Hugo Bedau, Chair of Board, National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

Bacre Waly Ndiaye, UN Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Execution, will be attending as a special guest. The Commission of Inquiry will publish and distribute its findings internationally later this year.

Curt Goering, Acting Executive Director of AIUSA said, "We feel that this impressive group of international experts will help focus attention on the fact that the use of the death penalty in the United States is an international issue, and of concern to human rights activists around the world. We are pleased to be hosting this event."

This tribunal is one of the activities held in advance of Amnesty International's International Council Meeting (ICM), which gathers every two years and includes representatives of Amnesty sections from around the world. This is the first time the ICM is meeting in the United States. It will open on Friday, August 6 and continue until Sunday, August 15, and as many as 260 delegates from 50 different countries are expected to attend. The ICM is the highest policy-making body in Amnesty International, which determines Amnesty's mandate and policy, and endorses a plan that sets new priorities for the coming years. The ICM is an internal working meeting which debates and makes decisions on resolutions concerning strategy, action, organization and finance. It also reviews the work of the outgoing International Executive Committee and it elects new members to this body.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The ICM is an internal meeting, which is closed to the public and media. Please contact the numbers listed above with any queries.

ENDS/

AI INDEX: ASA 13/WU 03/93 EXTERNAL
30 JULY 1993

BANGLADESH: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS MUNIR HUSSAIN'S EXECUTION

Amnesty International condemns the hanging of Munir Hussain on Tuesday 27 July in Dhaka Central Jail, Bangladesh. The organization had appealed to the highest authorities in Bangladesh for the commutation of his death sentence, pointing out the doubts expressed by some legal experts that the prisoner may not have received a fair trial.

An Amnesty International appeal was published in the Bangladeshi press on 8 July. Following this, Amnesty International received a communication from Bangladesh in which four pressure groups, who had campaigned for the imposition of the death penalty on Munir Hussain, criticised the organization's opposition to his death sentence. In a reply to these groups Amnesty International explained its total opposition to the death penalty and its objective of achieving total abolition of the death penalty in all countries of the world.

Amnesty International acknowledges the legitimate responsibility of governments to bring to justice people guilty of criminal offences. However, the organization believes that the death penalty is a violation of fundamental human rights. The death penalty violates the right to life, guaranteed in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Furthermore, research throughout the world has failed to produce evidence that the death penalty has any special power to reduce crime or political violence. Amnesty International campaigns for the commutation of all death sentences and the total abolition of the death penalty in all countries that retain this punishment.

Amnesty International urgently appeals to the Government of Bangladesh to commute all the existing death sentences, and to review legislation so as to remove the death penalty from Bangladesh's statute books. The organization also calls upon other political authorities in Bangladesh to support this appeal.

For further information see Amnesty International Urgent Action, Bangladesh: Fear of imminent execution, AI Index: ASA 13/09/93 and News Service item, Bangladesh: Amnesty International appeals for commutation of imminent execution, AI Index: ASA 13/WU 02/93 (News Service 77/93).

ENDS/