



Conveyor belt of injustice in Nigerian prisons

"We are dying in silence"

Inmate who has been awaiting trial for eight years.

Three out of five people held behind bars in Nigeria's prisons have not been convicted of any offence. They are waiting, in shameful conditions, to be tried. Most wait two, three or four years, and some up to 10, with no idea how long they will be held.

Many inmates sleep two to a bed or on the floor in filthy cells. Toilets are blocked and overflowing or simply non-existent, and there is no running water. Disease is widespread. The appalling and overcrowded prison conditions are seriously damaging the mental and physical health of thousands.

Even before reaching the prison, many inmates have been beaten by the police. "Confessions" extracted under torture are often used as evidence in trials.

Most detainees cannot afford a lawyer. Only one in seven awaiting trial has access to private legal representation – and there are only 91 legal aid lawyers working in the entire country.

Sometimes people not suspected of committing any crime are imprisoned along with convicted criminals. Some were arrested in place of a family member the police could not locate; others suffer from mental illness and were brought to prison by families unable or unwilling to take care of them.

In one such case, Bassy, a 35-year-old woman with mental illness, was brought to prison by her brother, who said the family could no longer cope with her. Prison authorities classified Bassy as a "civil lunatic". Accused of no crime and never brought before a judge, Bassy spent almost three years in prison, sleeping on the floor in a cell with 11 women, before a Nigerian NGO enabled her transfer to hospital.

The Nigerian government has often said it will reform the criminal justice system, but it has failed to do so. Despite many presidential commissions and committees recommending reform, the recommendations have not been implemented. Instead, the government has merely set up new committees and commissions.

In a scathing 50-page report, *Nigeria: Prisoners' rights systematically flouted* (AMR 44/001/2008), Amnesty International details a prison system that is utterly failing the Nigerian people, calling it a "conveyor belt of injustice, from beginning to end". The report also highlights the plight of prison staff, who work long and stressful hours for low wages that are often paid late. Poor pay often leads to petty extortion from prisoners, and staff shortages create security risks for both staff and inmates.

Urgent prison improvements and reforms are needed to ensure anyone detained is either tried within a reasonable time or released. Promises are not enough: reform of Nigeria's prison system is long overdue.



Inmates awaiting trial: "At times we are sick. We are suffering here."



Soldiers from the US Army's 4th Infantry Division round up detainees during a July 2003 operation aimed at pro-Saddam Hussein insurgents in Mishadiah, Iraq.

Inside US network of secret jails

From Abu Ghraib to secret CIA custody: the case of Khaled al-Maqtari

One man's story illustrates the global reach of the USA's secret detention network and provides chilling details of the deliberate and persistent use of torture and other ill-treatment. It is the story of a man who has never been charged with any crime, but who spent nearly three years in US custody as a victim of enforced disappearance.

Khaled Abdu Ahmed Saleh al-Maqtari, a 31-year-old Yemeni, was arrested in Fallujah, Iraq, in January 2004, during a US army operation against arms dealers. He was taken by helicopter to Abu Ghraib. He has given a detailed account of repeated beatings, sleep deprivation and being suspended upside down with his hands bound behind his back.

He says he was often stripped, beaten, drenched with cold water, and blasted from an air conditioner. Once he was then taken outdoors to a gravelled area, made to crawl across it cuffed and chained, and then confronted by three dogs. It was cold, and he was naked, wet and shivering. "The dogs came and put their noses right against me and made terrible noises. I had no defence, not even any clothes... I still have dreams about this."

After Abu Ghraib, Khaled al-Maqtari was secretly transferred first to a US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) "black site" in Afghanistan, and then, in April 2004, to a second "black site" in an unidentified country.

There he endured prolonged solitary confinement, sensory deprivation and overload (bright lighting and loud music), the use of stress positions, sleep deprivation, forced nudity, exposure to extremes of hot and cold, prolonged shackling, and withdrawal of medication. The abuses that have affected him most, he said, were the years of endless isolation, his total uncertainty about his future, the constant monitoring by cameras, and his segregation from the outside world, particularly the lack of contact with his family.

He was returned to Yemeni custody in September 2006, before being released unconditionally in May 2007.

On 6 September 2006 US President George W. Bush announced the transfer of 14 men from secret CIA custody to military detention in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. This was the first time that the US programme of clandestine detention, long an open secret, had been publicly acknowledged.

In September 2007, CIA Director General Michael Hayden defended the secret detention programme on the grounds that it was targeted and selective, "designed for only the most dangerous terrorists and those believed to have the most valuable information, such as knowledge of planned attacks." He and other US officials have used similar reasoning to defend the CIA's use of "waterboarding", flying in the face of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment under international law.

No matter how carefully targeted the programme, secret detention, in and of itself, violates international human rights and humanitarian law. Torture and enforced disappearance are both crimes under international law. The illegality of the CIA's secret programme has been accompanied by a complete absence of accountability for such crimes.

Detailed investigations by bodies such as the Council of Europe, together with the statements of the handful of men who have emerged from the secret prisons – released as quietly as they were apprehended – have helped to construct a detailed picture that demonstrates conclusively that the USA has carried out a range of human rights violations through the use of the secret detention programme.

For further information, see *A case to answer – from Abu Ghraib to secret CIA custody: the case of Khaled al-Maqtari* (AMR 51/013/2008).

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Liberian women struggle to rebuild their lives after war



Many women and girls are continuing to feel the devastating effects of violence and abuse in Liberia. (Kolahun, January 2008.)

Liberia's recent history is one of protracted and bloody war. An estimated 25,000 to 30,000 women and girls were directly involved in the conflict that lasted between 1999 and 2004, about 30-40 per cent of all the fighting forces. Some were armed combatants, others played roles such as porters, spies, cooks or victims of sexual slavery.

The majority of women were forced to participate, although some chose to take up arms. Significantly more women and girls opted to participate in the second conflict (1999-2004) than in the first (1989-1997). Their reasons for joining the conflict included protecting themselves from sexual violence, avenging the death of family members, peer pressure, material gain and survival.

Amnesty International researchers recently visited Liberia. They found that many women associated with the conflict are still suffering from the inhumane treatment they endured at that time, and that only a small proportion have benefited from the post-war disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme that should have helped them. Furthermore, levels of rape and other abuse remain extremely high. Nevertheless, despite the enormous obstacles, many of the women that Amnesty International met were rebuilding their lives.

Mickey's story

When Mickey was 12 years old, forces from Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) killed her father, brother and sister, and then a leading NPFL general raped her. Like thousands of others she fled to Sierra Leone with her mother to seek refuge from the war. It was in Kenema that Mickey met up with a group called ULIMO (United

Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia), one of the warring factions that came together in the early 1990s to fight the NPFL.

At the time she was just 13, but despite her youth she became a commander, in charge of other children. Mickey says now that although not happy about what she was doing, she felt that with a gun she could get the things that she needed to survive without a family to take care of her.

She was too afraid to join the DDRR programme that started in April 2004 and now supports her school-aged son by working as a hairdresser. She is hoping to go back to school to get her high school diploma.

Jackie's story

In 1990 Jackie was displaced from her family when fighting first broke out and was caught up in the war. Jackie was taken by an ULIMO soldier and raped. She was 14 years old. The same group killed her father. She joined Charles Taylor's NPFL, and, although never on the front line, she rose through the ranks. By the time she left in 2002 she was a female commander of over 150 women.

Jackie did not go through the DDRR programme because she had no faith that this process would help her – she had been through the programme in 1997 and felt that it let a lot of people down. Jackie now works for Search for Common Ground, an international NGO that makes radio programmes about forgiveness and reconciliation. As a single mother, she feels she is lucky to be able to support herself and her son.

See *Liberia: A flawed process discriminates against women and girls* (AFR 34/004/2008).

Trapped in a cycle of poverty and violence in Jamaica's inner cities

"The system is so corrupt you cannot trust anyone. Some police officers are good friends with the bad guys, so anyone can come and kill me or my family anytime."

The father of 19-year-old André Thomas, talking to Amnesty International about the death of his son in a police vehicle on his way to hospital.

There is a public security crisis in Jamaica's inner cities. Jamaica has one of the highest rates of violent crime in the world. The vast majority of victims are poor people from the inner cities, in particular Kingston and Spanish Town, who do not have the money to pay for private security. The justice system in Jamaica is failing these victims of violence, guaranteeing impunity for criminal gangs. The number of murders investigated and solved by the police in 2005 was just over a third; for drug-related murders that figure was zero.

More than 30 per cent of the population of the Kingston Metropolitan Region live in these inner cities, many in extremely overcrowded conditions and in poverty, with high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, limited access to water, electricity and gas, and shared toilet facilities.

Excessive use of force

When the security forces intervene in these areas, they often do so with violence and excessive use of force. Inner-city dwellers living in poverty are trapped between the violence of criminal gangs and police brutality. The Jamaican Constabulary Force, which is supposed to protect people from violence, killed at least 229 people in 2006. The circumstances in which many of these killings took place suggest they may have been extrajudicial executions.

The impunity which members of the police forces accused of human rights violations appear to enjoy destroys any confidence that these communities have that the authorities are committed to providing justice and protecting their rights.

Gang leaders known as "dons" have taken over the running of these areas. They extort "taxes" from local businesses, distribute food, school books, legal and illegal jobs, and punish and sometimes kill those they believe have disobeyed their rules.

Not only have consecutive governments and political leaders failed to protect people from gang violence, they also have played a role in allowing the violence to flourish. The rule of the "dons" is at its most complete in so-called "garrison communities", each created by one of the two main political parties to guarantee a seat in the elections. Those opposed to the ruling party in their community risk death at the hands of armed gangs, or at the very least damage to their property. The inhabitants are forced to vote for the "garrison" candidate through intimidation.

For more information, see *"Let them kill each other": Public security in Jamaica's inner cities* (AMR 38/001/2008).

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Human rights defender and journalists abducted

On the evening of 23 November 2007, Oleg Orlov, a leading Russian human rights defender, and three journalists from the Russian REN TV station, were abducted from their hotel in Nazran in the Republic of Ingushetia by masked men. They were then driven away, beaten up and left in a field.

Oleg Orlov was in Nazran to meet colleagues at the local office of the human rights organization, Memorial. The incident took place the day before a demonstration against alleged human rights violations by the security forces.

According to Oleg Orlov, the armed security personnel guarding the Hotel Assa, where he and the three journalists were staying, were ordered to leave their posts. Two hours later around 15 armed men entered the hotel, threatened staff at gunpoint and forced their way into Oleg Orlov's room.

The men, wearing masks, ordered him to lie on the floor and twisted his arms behind his back. They asked what he was doing in Nazran and ordered him to hand over his possessions. When he protested they beat him on his ribs. They removed his possessions and put a plastic bag over his head. He was then dragged outside and put into a minibus, along with the three journalists.



They were driven through numerous police checkpoints in Nazran, where freedom of movement of civilians was severely restricted in the run-up to the demonstration, leading to suspicions that the minibus belonged to the security forces. After an hour or so the minibus stopped and the four men were thrown to the ground and kicked in the head and on their bodies.

➔ Please write to the Ingushetia authorities, calling for an impartial and thorough investigation into the abduction and beating of Oleg Orlov and the three journalists.

Send appeals to: Yuri Turygin, Prosecutor of the Republic of Ingushetia, Ul. Fabrichnaya 9, Nazran 366720, Republic of Ingushetia, Russian Federation.
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor of the Republic of Ingushetia

CUBA

Doctor imprisoned

On 7 April it is World Health Day. Marcelo Cano Rodríguez, a doctor and human rights defender, will be spending the day in prison. He was arrested in the city of Las Tunas on 25 March 2003 as he was investigating the arrest of another doctor, Jorge Luis García Paneque. Luis García Paneque, a fellow member of the Cuban Independent Medical Association, had been arrested a few days before, along with scores of other dissidents, during a crackdown on dissidents on the island.

Marcelo Cano Rodríguez was tried and convicted of participating in "counter-revolutionary activities" and sentenced to 18 years in prison. He was accused by the court of visiting prisoners and their families and maintaining ties with the international organization Doctors without Borders. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

He is currently being held in Ariza prison in the city of Cienfuegos, around 250 km south-east of his home in the capital, Havana, making family visits difficult.

Marcelo Cano Rodríguez is the national co-ordinator of the Cuban Independent Medical Association and a member of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National

Reconciliation. Both organizations are unrecognized by the Cuban government.

The right to a fair trial is limited in Cuba, with courts and prosecutors under government control. The right of dissidents to a fair and proper defence is also unlikely since Cubans do not have access to legal counsel of their choice; all lawyers are employed by the government. As such they may be reluctant to challenge prosecutors or evidence presented by the state intelligence services.

In February 2008, Amnesty International welcomed the release of four prisoners of conscience and Cuba's signing of two international human rights treaties. However, there are at least another 58 people detained in Cuba solely for the peaceful exercise of their fundamental freedoms. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience. They include teachers, librarians, journalists and human rights defenders.

➔ Please write to the Cuban authorities, calling for Marcelo Cano Rodríguez' immediate and unconditional release.

Send appeals to: Sr. Raúl Castro Ruz, Presidente, Havana, Cuba.
Fax: +53 7 8333 085. Email: cuba@un.int
Salutation: Your Excellency

Carnage and despair in Iraq



Abu Abdullah (right) stands in the debris of his former shop, destroyed by a bomb in February 2007. Two of his sons were killed in the explosion. Tens of thousands of people have died in bomb explosions and suicide attacks across Iraq.

Five years after the US-led invasion, Iraq is one of the most dangerous countries in the world. Hundreds of people are being killed every month in the pervasive violence, while countless lives are threatened by poverty, cuts to power and water supplies, food and medical shortages, and rising violence against women and girls.

The US-led Multi-National Force (MNF) and the Iraqi government have failed to institute the rule of law, uphold human rights, bring peace and security, or end impunity. Armed groups continue to kidnap, torture and kill civilians. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in bomb explosions or suicide attacks. All sides have committed gross human rights violations, some amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Economic recovery and reconstruction have been extremely slow, partly due to the violence but also because of poor planning, corruption, and damaging policies such as the dismantlement of the Iraqi army.

Much of the money for reconstruction has been spent on security, including private military and security companies. Relatively little has gone to meeting the needs of the millions of Iraqi children, women and men who are living in poverty.

More than two in three Iraqis lack access to safe drinking water, more than four in 10 live on less than a dollar a day, half the population of working age is unemployed, and eight million people need emergency aid to survive. Health and education

systems have virtually collapsed, resulting in unnecessary deaths for lack of medical care and soaring illiteracy rates among children.

From early 2006, sectarian violence intensified, forcing many to flee their homes. More than four million people have become displaced, nearly 15 per cent of Iraq's estimated total population of 27 million.

The Iraqi government, itself divided along sectarian lines, has failed to deal with the serious human rights violations perpetrated by its security forces. Around 60,000 people are being detained by either Iraqi security forces or the MNF. Most are being held without charge or trial. Torture and other ill-treatment are routine in prisons, detention centres and police stations controlled by Iraqi security forces.

The death penalty is being used extensively since its reintroduction in 2004. Hundreds of people have been sentenced to death after grossly unfair trials and at least 33 were executed in 2007.

Amnesty International is calling on all sides involved in the violence to respect the human rights of everyone in Iraq, and for the international community to offer meaningful support to ensure the welfare and well-being of the more than four million Iraqis who are now either living as refugees in countries such as Syria and Jordan or are internally displaced within Iraq itself.

See Amnesty International, *Carnage and despair: Iraq five years on* (MDE 14/001/2008).

News and updates

Good news from the Council of Europe

Trafficking: The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings came into force on 1 February 2008. Sixteen states have become parties to the Convention. They have now committed to taking action to criminalize trafficking and to protect the rights of trafficked people. These measures include accurately identifying trafficked people, unconditional offers of assistance and protection and ensuring access to redress, including compensation, to victims.

Human rights defenders: The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Declaration on 6 February 2008, which, in effect, creates a new mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders in Europe. The Declaration mandates the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights to take up cases of human rights defenders, including those at immediate risk, with government officials.

Upholding the ban on torture: The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the forcible return of Tunisian national Nassim Saadi, from Italy to Tunisia, where he would be at serious risk of torture or other ill-treatment, would violate the European Convention on Human Rights. Nassim Saadi had been sentenced by a Tunisian military court in his absence for terrorism-related offences allegedly committed abroad. Confessions extracted under torture are used in Tunisia as evidence in trials that result in long prison sentences or even the death penalty. The Court's landmark ruling reaffirmed that the right not to be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment is absolute; it applies to all, including those suspected of involvement in terrorism.

UN human rights reform under the spotlight

The human rights records of UN Member States around the world are about to get a rigorous examination in ways that many observers have previously found lacking. A new review process is due to begin in April and Amnesty International is making a significant contribution towards getting it off the ground.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a new mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council and will regularly review the human rights obligations and commitments of all 192 Member States. This regular and systematic scrutiny, which governments themselves will carry out, will address one of the main criticisms of the Council's predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights, which was accused of considering only a small number of countries, and of often avoiding pressing situations for political reasons.

From 7-18 April, the UPR Working Group will examine the human rights records of 16 countries: Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, India, Indonesia, Morocco, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Tunisia and the UK. This initial phase will be followed by two further sessions in 2008, so that 48 countries, selected by drawing lots, will have been scrutinized during the year.

An important feature of the new process is that governments of the countries under examination are expected to carry out a broad consultation among civil society. Amnesty International has been lobbying energetically to ensure that all relevant voices are heard. It has submitted information on 14 of the 16 countries above and its members and supporters are working with civil society within each country to raise awareness of the new process. Although it is by no means certain that the UPR will work in practice, it is hoped that the unique opportunity now offered to shape the mechanism will help to establish good precedents for the future.

For more information on the UPR see www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx

More trade unionists sentenced in Viet Nam

Three members of the United Workers-Farmers Organization (UWFO) received prison sentences in December 2007 which were upheld on appeal in February 2008. They were accused of collecting complaints about land use and sending them overseas and were found guilty under Article 258 of the Penal code of "abusing democracy and freedom rights to infringe on the interests of the state, and legitimate rights and interests of organizations and citizens."

Doan Van Dien was sentenced to four and a half years' imprisonment; his son, Doan Huy Chuong, to one and a half years'; and Than Thi Le Hang to three years'. The fate of the fourth UWFO member arrested in November 2006, Phung Quoc Quyen, is not known. Doan Huy Chuong should be due for release in May 2008. Tran Quoc Hien, the spokesperson of UWFO, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in May 2007.

See *Worldwide Appeal* May 2007 and update July 2007.

International footballer promotes Control Arms



High profile celebrities and sports stars are supporting the Control Arms campaign. They include Lilian Thuram (left), the French international footballer, who holds a football bearing his signature. The campaign aims to promote the Arms Trade Treaty ahead of the Euro 2008 football tournament. Amnesty International members from every region of the world are planning to promote the campaign by organizing tournaments using Control Arms footballs.

RWANDA

Minister must be released

Charles Ntakirutinka, a former minister in the Rwandan government, is serving a 10-year sentence for inciting civil disobedience and for association with criminal elements following an unfair trial. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his unconditional release.

Charles Ntakirutinka helped launch the Democratic Party for Renewal (PDR-Ubuyanja, Parti Démocratique de Renouveau) in May 2001 with former President Pasteur Bizimungu and six others. He served as minister of several departments during Pasteur Bizimungu's Presidency between 1994 and 2000.

All eight men were arrested in April 2002, unfairly tried and then imprisoned as part of a well-documented crackdown on political opposition by the ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF alleged that the men had organized clandestine meetings with intent to disturb public order, provoke civil conflict and target certain government officials for assassination.

All of the co-defendants, except Charles Ntakirutinka received and served five-year sentences for criminal association. Pasteur Bizimungu, who received greater media attention than Charles Ntakirutinka, was pardoned by

President Paul Kagame and released on 6 April 2007.

The arrest, detention and trial of Charles Ntakirutinka and the other men fell far short of international standards. Defendants were allowed to present only a limited number of witnesses and the judge refused to allow the defence to fully cross-examine prosecution witnesses.

Witness statements were reportedly sometimes extracted under duress or torture. Testimony given by some prosecution witnesses contradicted earlier statements. One prosecution witness told the court that he had lied to the police and Public Prosecutor's Office out of fear.

All five of the defence witnesses reported that none of the six co-defendants had undertaken any of the alleged actions against them. Charles Ntakirutinka is being held at Kigali Central Prison where he is set to remain until 2012.

➔ Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Charles Ntakirutinka as a prisoner of conscience. Send appeals to: President Paul Kagame, Présidence de la République, BP 15 Kigali, Rwanda. Fax: +250 58 43 90 Salutation: Your Excellency

Worldwide Appeals

Australian Prime Minister says sorry



Campaigners for Indigenous rights, including Amnesty International, join celebrations to mark Australia's Apology Day on 13 February.

"We apologize for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians", said Kevin Rudd. In a speech on 13 February the Australian Prime Minister issued a historic apology to the "stolen generations" of Australia's Indigenous people. "For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry."

At least 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their parents between

1910 and 1970. According to the 1997 report, *Bringing Them Home*, published by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), many of those children were sexually, physically and mentally abused. The study details the history of Australia's policy of assimilating Indigenous children into the non-Indigenous community.

The Prime Minister's statement is a testament to the work of Amnesty International Australia and other organizations who have long campaigned for a formal apology. Amnesty International has also called on the government of Australia to follow up this important gesture with effective and timely implementation of the report's recommendations.

Executions in Saudi Arabia increase in defiance of world trend



Siti Zainab Binti Duhr Rupa has been at risk of execution since 1999.



Suliamon Olyfemi was sentenced to death in May 2005.

Saudi Arabia has had one of the highest execution rates of any country in the world for many years. At least 158 people were put to death in 2007 and Amnesty International had recorded at least 31 in 2008 as *the Wire* went to press. Those executed were convicted of crimes which included murder, armed burglary and drug-related offences.

Death sentences in Saudi Arabia are often imposed after secret and summary trials that breach international fair trial standards and Saudi Arabia's own Law on Criminal Procedures and Code of Law Practice. Those accused of capital offences receive little or no legal assistance, and in many cases are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Many defendants are reportedly convicted largely or solely on the basis of "confessions" that they made in pre-trial detention which they allege were obtained under torture or other duress or by deception, but which are nonetheless accepted by the courts. Foreign nationals are often interrogated and tried without being provided with any or adequate interpretation or translation, with the result that they often do not understand the proceedings and are denied an effective opportunity to present their defence.

One of those at risk of execution is Siti Zainab Binti Duhr Rupa, an Indonesian woman who has been held in Medina Prison since 1999. She reportedly suffers from a mental disability. She is reported to have been convicted after she "confessed" to murdering her employer during police interrogation.

Also at risk is Nigerian national Suliamon Olyfemi, who was reportedly sentenced to death in May 2005 in connection with the murder of a police officer in Jeddah in 2002. He was one of 13 Nigerians arrested and charged in connection with the murder. During his trial, which was conducted in Arabic, a language he does not understand, Suliamon Olyfemi had no access to legal representation or consular assistance, and reportedly was not provided with adequate translation.

The death penalty is applied in Saudi Arabia for a wide range of offences, including some which have no lethal consequences. Execution is by beheading, carried out in public. Amnesty International continues to campaign intensively on individual cases in Saudi Arabia as well as for abolition of the death penalty worldwide.

International protest as prison reopens in Peru

With the reopening of Challapalca Maximum Security Prison in October 2007, conditions for inmates there remain a serious concern for Amnesty International.

The prison first opened in October 1997 to hold prisoners accused of terrorism-related crimes. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations repeatedly called for its closure due to the poor conditions experienced by prisoners and its remote location at high altitude. Finally in February 2005, all prisoners were transferred out of the prison. However, in October 2007 the authorities reversed their decision and began to use the prison again.

Challapalca Prison is in an isolated region of Peru's altiplano (highlands), in the southern department of Puno. At over 4,600 metres above sea level, the prison is difficult to reach by road and so limits the right of prisoners to maintain contact with relatives, lawyers and doctors.

The harsh conditions in Challapalca Prison have been highlighted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and many others.

In February 2002 Peru's Constitutional Court ruled, in part, in favour of a petition requesting that inmates be returned to their original prisons in Lima. The ruling set out the prison authorities' responsibility to protect inmates and prison staff from the extreme cold, maintain a healthy environment and to allow inmates regular family contact as part of their re-education and re-socialisation.

Unfit to serve as a prison

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights visited the prison in August 2002. It urged the Peruvian State to "immediately deem [it] unfit to serve as a prison, for good."

A few weeks after its reopening in October 2007, a delegation from Puno's Human Rights Ombudsperson's Office visited Challapalca Prison and noted that the conditions still did not meet the requirements of the 2002 Constitutional Court's ruling.

Despite the extreme cold typical of the region, inmates had insufficient bedcovers and no heating inside the cells. None of the showers worked, nor were there any permanent arrangements at that time for transport by visitors to the prison.

The location and infrastructure of Challapalca Prison continue to violate the right of inmates not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and are tantamount to punishment for inmates serving their sentences there.

ACT NOW! Please write to the Peruvian authorities, calling for Challapalca Prison to be immediately and permanently closed. For more information on this action, please contact the South America team at www.amnesty.org/en/contact

Send appeals to:
Dra. Rosario Fernández Figueroa,
Minister of Justice,
Ministerio de Justicia,
Scipión Llonca 350,
Miraflores,
Lima 18, Peru
Fax: + 51 1 422 3577
Salutation: Sra. Ministra

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