
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Human rights information and web links for health professionals

AI Bulletin no. 23, 12 November 1999

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-----RECENT AI STATEMENTS & REPORTS

AFGHANISTAN: Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment [AI Index: ASA 11/15/99, November 1999]. This report gives a chronology both of the political situation and the pattern of human rights abuses in the country since 1979. The report is available at:
<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1999/ASA/31101599.htm>

SIERRA LEONE: Recommendations on Sierra Leone submitted by AI to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), which starts today in Durban, South Africa, (12 - 15 November 1999) are available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1999/AFR/15101199.htm>

-----Dr FLORA BROVINA, KOSOVO

The trial in Serbia of Dr Flora Brovina, a prominent Albanian human rights activist, on charges of involvement in terrorist acts and of assisting the Kosovo Liberation Army, has been postponed until later this month. A BBC report on her court case which was due to start yesterday (11 November) is available at:

http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_515000/515364.stm

Amnesty International has issued several appeals on behalf of Dr Brovina, most recently on 5 November, in particular expressing concern about her health and the nature the judicial process against her -- for an earlier action see:

<http://www2.amnesty.se/isext99.nsf/7ebd731e17db7550412566ee00476b3f/6dca7f715eacd876c12568090054266f?OpenDocument>

-----ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Organ Watch, a task force composed of social scientists, transplant surgeons and human rights activists, is exploring the ethical dimensions of organ donation and procurement practices around the world. For background to the establishment of the task force see:

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/19991105/hl/org10_1.html . The organization's mission statement can be found at: <http://www.organwatch.org> .

-----RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT CONFERENCE CONCLUDES

The 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (which normally take place every 4 years) ended on 6 November 1999. For the final declaration and the plan of action for the years 2000-2003 see:

<http://www.redcross.alertnet.org/en/conference/proceedings.asp>

-----OSCE MEMBERS CALLED ON TO END TORTURE

The text of a statement delivered by Dr Vincent Iacopino at the recent OSCE review conference in Istanbul, Turkey, can be accessed at:

<http://www.usia.gov/cgi-bin/washfile/display.pl?p=/products/washfile/topic/rights&f=99110908.wdh&t=/products/washfile/newsitem.shtml> . Dr Iacopino called for an end to torture in OSCE countries. He was present at the meeting as a public member of the US delegation. The OSCE web site can be found at: <http://www.osceprag.cz/>

-----HUMAN RIGHTS PRIZE TO MARY ROBINSON

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, has been awarded the 1999 Erasmus Prize. The prize is awarded annually by the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation for outstanding social, cultural or scientific achievements in Europe (New York Times, 9 November).

-----DEATH OF JACOBO TIMERMAN

The writer and publisher, Jacobo Timerman, has died in Buenos Aires, aged 76. He was the author of "Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number" a 1981 memoir of political imprisonment under the Argentinian military government. See:

http://wire.ap.org/APnews/center_story.html?FRONTID=CSA&STORYID=APIS70LV6KG0

-----EXHUMATIONS IN KOSOVO

According to a CNN report, the ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte told the UN Security Council on 10 November that more than 2100 bodies of Albanians had been exhumed in Kosovo. She said that she had been told of more than 500 grave sites and 11,000 buried bodies in the province. See:

<http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9911/10/kosovo.crimes/index.html> . The web site of the ICTY can be found at: <http://www.un.org/icty/>

-----DEATH PENALTY

The US Supreme Court has decided not to rule on the question as to whether a decades-long wait for a death sentence to be carried out is itself so "cruel and unusual" as to be unconstitutional. An appeal had been brought by a prisoner held in death row in Nebraska for two decades and one in Florida held under sentence of death for 25 years.

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/politics/scotus/articles/110999death-penalty.html> [may require registration]

The chances of executing the innocent in the USA are discussed in an Atlantic Monthly article (November 1999): <http://www.theatlantic.com/cgi-bin/o/issues/99nov/9911wrongman.htm>

The text of a recent speech given by former Florida Chief Justice, Gerald Kogan, is available at the Death Penalty Information Center site. The speech, given at an Amnesty International conference in Orlando, Florida on 23 October 1999, touches on a variety of issues related to the death penalty. See: <http://www.essential.org/dpic/Koganspeech.html>

For a discussion on the future of the electric chair in Florida see a Miami Herald article (11 November) available at: <http://www.herald.com/content/today/digdocs/063162.htm> . The article quotes Deborah Denno, a New York law professor as saying: "Execution methods are symbols of bigger things. The electric chair is a symbol of retribution and extreme vengeance. The electric chair is 'death penalty plus.'"

-----HIV ALLEGED AS WEAPON UNDER APARTHEID

TWO apartheid-era security officers have asked the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for amnesty for their part in the use of askaris (opposition defectors) to spread Aids in 1990. The Mail and Guardian article, citing a TRC statement, can be found at: <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/za/news.html#aids>

-----TORTURE IN RUSSIA

Human Rights Watch has published the findings of an investigation into the use of torture in Russia. The press release announcing the findings is available at:

<http://www.hrw.org/press/1999/nov/torture1110.htm> , and the report can be accessed at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/russia/> . The report notes the routine lack of medical evidence available in torture cases.

-----RECENT CPT REPORTS

Publication of the response of the Finnish Government to the report on the 1998 CPT visit is available at: <http://www.cpt.coe.fr/en/press/991109en.htm>

A press release giving details of the recent CPT visit to Greece is available at:
<http://www.cpt.coe.fr/en/press/991105en.htm>

-----FGM GESTURE

According to Reuters (9 November) hundreds of women who circumcised young girls in the Guinea have handed in their special ceremonial knives, in a weekend gesture hailed by opponents of the practice as a breakthrough. State radio reported that the women handed in their knives at a ceremony in the town of Korosa in the east of the former French colony.

-----MEETINGS

First Annual conference on the Social Psychology of Human Rights "*Peace and Human Rights in the New Millennium*". Organised by the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (PRODH). The conference will take place in Mexico City from 8 to 10 December 1999 and it is free to all wishing to participate. For more information: Fax: +52-5-535-6892 or mailto:visitas@sjsocial.org. Visit the PRODH website <http://www.sjsocial.org/PRODH/>

-----RECENT PAPERS/ARTICLES

Freedman AM, Halpern AL. The psychiatrist's dilemma: a conflict of roles in legal executions. Australian and NZ Journal of Psychiatry, 1999;33(5):629-35. Examines the ethical dilemmas inherent in the death penalty.

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