

**EXTERNAL**

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## **SPAIN: THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT AND SUICIDE OF JOSÉ LUIS IGLESIAS AMARO IN PICASSENT II PRISON, VALENCIA**

Amnesty International is concerned about the alleged ill-treatment by prison guards in Picassent II prison of José Luis Iglesias Amaro and about the negligence of the authorities in allowing a prisoner with a history of self-injury to be placed in isolation with access to the means to commit suicide. The organization is seeking information from the Spanish authorities about the progress of the investigation into the alleged ill-treatment of José Luis Iglesias and the circumstances of his death.

At approximately 10pm on 28 February 1994 the corpse of José Luis Iglesias was discovered by guards in cell 101 of Block 8 in Picassent II prison, Valencia. According to reports, his body was still warm but efforts to revive him failed. The prisoner was being held in isolation and had reportedly hanged himself with a noose made from his shoe laces tied to the bars of the cell door. The deceased left a letter apologizing for his action to his family. The autopsy findings and circumstances were found to be in keeping with a suicidal hanging.

Amnesty International has received numerous consistent allegations from fellow prisoners in the isolation unit and other prisoners with special status (responsible for cleaning and other duties) with access to the unit, stating that José Luis Iglesias had been repeatedly beaten by guards in the days preceding his death. It is alleged that groups of guards, armed with truncheons, tear gas and handcuffs, entered his cell on various occasions and beat him.

The prisoner had a history of self-injury and had recently been released from La Fe Hospital in Valencia after receiving treatment for reportedly swallowing an aerial, spectacle frames and pushing a nail into his navel. While in hospital he had been shackled to the bed but, according to press reports, had managed to undo the shackles and attempted to escape. He was stopped before he had managed to leave the hospital premises and he was taken back into custody by Civil Guard officers. Prisoners who saw him being re-admitted to the prison said he was lying on a stretcher when he was taken to the cell where he later died. It is alleged that certain guards punched him and pulled his hair while he was on the stretcher.

An autopsy was carried out on José Luis Iglesias on 1 March 1994. The report noted - *inter alia* - blood clots the size of "pigeon eggs" on the cranium and bruising to the face and other parts of the body. It estimated that these injuries were approximately two to four days old but apparently no tissues were taken for histological examination, which would have established more accurately the dates of the injuries.

An independent forensic specialist, who examined the autopsy report at Amnesty International's request, considered that the injuries to the neck were consistent with a suicidal hanging, possibly an aggravated suicide in view of the allegations of prior physical abuse. He felt that the injuries to other parts of the body were in keeping with the deceased having been beaten with truncheons some days prior to his death. Photographs of the deceased in his shroud in a coffin clearly showed the extent of the cuts and bruises to his face.

The forensic specialist was also concerned that a prisoner with a history of recent self-inflicted injury, and consequently at high risk of self-harm, should be placed in isolation which "...although reducing the opportunities for self-harm is recognized as increasing the risk of self-harm". In these circumstances it was, in his opinion, negligent to have allowed the deceased access to his shoe laces which he then used to kill himself.

A preliminary inquiry [Diligencias Previas N° 471/94] has been opened in the court in Picassent and oral statements have been made by relatives to the court in Madrid alleging assault (agresiones) against the deceased.