

AI INDEX: IOR 62/06/99  
22 November 1999

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Open letter to the Organization of Americas States**

### **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Convention on Human Rights and 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights**

**22 NOVEMBER 1999**

**San José** -- As government representatives from the Americas gather next week in San José, Costa Rica, for the commemorative events around the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Convention on Human Rights and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Inter-American Court, Amnesty International is calling on them to seize the opportunity to put in practice their promises for an end to human rights violations in the region.

Specifically, the human rights organization is calling on States to:

#### **Strengthen the inter-American system for human rights**

Thirty years on, in spite of the adoption of the American Convention and other treaties intended to increase human rights protection in the region, there is still much to be done to strengthen the inter-American system and to make these promises a reality. Amnesty International is in particular calling on States to ratify the human rights treaties of the system, to remove any reservations which are contrary to international law, and to implement the decisions and recommendations of their own human rights mechanisms.

#### **Abolish the Death penalty**

In spite of the commitment to eradicate the death penalty expressed by States in 1969, when the American Convention was adopted, it is still retained in several countries. The USA has still not ratified the American Convention and has executed more than 350 people since 1990. It has, together with Pakistan, the highest death row population in the world, exceeding 3,500. In 1996 Guatemala renewed executions, after a gap of 13 years, and extended its application in flagrant violation of its commitments under the American Convention. Countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and the Bahamas have executed people since 1990. Nineteen of the 24 states which have ratified the American Convention are abolitionist, but only six of these have ratified the Protocol to the American Convention for the abolition of the death penalty.

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**For further information please see open letter, *30 Años de la Convención Americana sobre Derechos Humanos: Todavía hay mucho camino por recorrer* (AI Index: IOR 62/05/99s). For an interview, please contact AI Press Office (London): +44 171 413 5566.**

