
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 56/95

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **AFGHANISTAN** (this item will be sent to Asia media); **JORDAN** (this item will be sent to Jordan media contacts by the research team)

INTERNAL -

PLEASE NOTE: A delegation of three people will be going on a research mission to Haiti between 18 March - 3 April. There will be meetings with research contacts and possibly some government officials

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95, 37/95, 42/95 & 44/95

Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

EVENTS AND MISSIONS

The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO CHECHNYA 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53 & 54

MISSION TO BURUNDI 13 - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

** MISSION TO HAITI 18 March - 3 April ** -

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AFGHANISTAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS DELIBERATE AND ARBITRARY KILLINGS,
TORTURE AND RAPE

As the conflict in Afghanistan escalates, Amnesty International is appealing to all factions in the war to stop the deliberate and arbitrary killing, rape and other torture of unarmed civilians.

"Faction leaders must clearly order their fighters to end these vicious assaults on civilians," Amnesty International said today.

During the past few days, government forces have reportedly carried out raids on hundreds of civilian homes in Kabul's south-western district of Karte Seh, killing or beating family members, looting property, and raping women.

One family, interviewed by a foreign journalist in Kabul, said government soldiers had told them they wanted to "drink the blood of the Hazaras", the ethnic Shi'a minority living in Karte Seh district. A man with both arms in a sling told journalists that government soldiers broke his arms with a shovel when he tried to stop them from looting his house.

Government fighters reportedly went on rampage after the capture of Karte Seh in Kabul on 12 March. They engaged in systematic looting of whole streets. Medical workers in the area confirmed at least six incidents of rape and two attempted rapes, but believed the actual number was much higher.

Indeed, Kabul has been the scene of indiscriminate artillery attacks and fierce fighting between government forces and opposition armed groups over the past couple of weeks.

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JORDAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES QUASHING OF MU'TAH TRIAL VERDICTS BY COURT OF CASSATION

Amnesty International welcomes the Jordanian Court of Cassation's reversal on 13 March of verdicts from an unfair trial before the State Security Court.

The five military cadets and five others, who had been convicted in January 1994 of having plotted to kill King Hussein bin Talal during a graduation ceremony at Mu'tah University in June 1993, were immediately freed.

The Court of Cassation's judgment stated that confessions obtained from the 10 defendants were illegal because they were extracted under duress. It also found that the testimony of one of the main prosecution witnesses did not validate the charges against the accused.

During the original trial one businessman, Isma'il Wahwah, was sentenced to death, as were the two defendants who were tried in absentia. Nine other defendants were sentenced to between 15 years and life imprisonment.

In October 1993 an Amnesty International observer attended two sessions of the trial and met judges of the State Security Court and the military prosecutor. The observer also met lawyers and relatives of the accused. In a statement following the verdict in 1994 the organization raised concerns about the conduct of the trial.

All the defendants present in court had been held incommunicado by the General Intelligence Department (GID) in Amman for up to four months, where they alleged that they had been tortured to make confessions. They all retracted their confessions in court. Even after their interrogation defendants did not have access to doctors of their own choice; however, in September 1993 four of the detainees were examined by doctors of the Ministry of Health who noted injuries "less than six months old" on all four.

Amnesty International welcomes the decision of the Court of Cassation, which is in keeping with the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Jordan, which states, in Article 15, that:

"Each State Party shall ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture shall not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings, except against a person accused of torture as evidence that the statement was made."

Amnesty International now calls on the Jordanian Government to review the continued practice of prolonged incommunicado detention in Jordan, as it facilitates torture and ill-treatment and compromises the right to a fair trial.

Another case at present awaiting judgment by the Court of Cassation is the so-called "Arab Afghans Case", in which 25 people were tried before the State Security Court on charges of plotting to overthrow the government and carrying out bombings and other violent acts. In December 1994, 11 defendants (three of them tried in absentia) were sentenced to death, seven were given jail sentences ranging between seven years' and life imprisonment and seven were acquitted.

Defendants' complaints of torture in incommunicado detention do not appear to have been promptly and impartially investigated, as required by Article 13 of the Convention against Torture. In a letter to the Jordanian Minister of the Interior in February 1995, Amnesty International stated that "[i]t is all the more important to ensure that procedures are in accordance with international standards when, as in these cases, detainees face the death penalty".

Amnesty International has frequently expressed concern that the State Security Court cannot be seen to provide the same guarantees of independence and impartiality provided by the regular courts. The organization renews its call to the Jordanian authorities to abolish exceptional courts such as the State Security Court and allow the ordinary judiciary, with adequate resources, to recover full criminal jurisdiction.

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