

AI Index: NWS 11/57/93
Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 1645

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street

London WC1X 8DJ

United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 9 JUNE 1993

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 57/93

Contained in this weekly update are external items on the USA and Liberia.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS

(New Information)

PLEASE NOTE: The second and third ENRs for the World Conference: Challenge to Governments, (Ref: 838) and AI Activities Compilation, (Ref: 1840) are ready. Please order copies and refer journalists for copies from: Dubbs Copying House, giving the correct video reference number (as above) on Tel: +44 71 629 0055 or Fax: +44 71 287 8796.

Amnesty International's press office in Vienna will be based at AI's tent outside the Austria Centre and will be open for 24 hours each day. Telephone: +43 1 219 3572/3573. Fax/E-Mail: +43 1 219 3574. These will be installed on 11 June.

AI's press team will be staying at Pension Dr Geissler, Postgasse 14, 1010 Vienna. Telephone: +43 1 533 2803.

The strategy team in Vienna will report developments to sections via the IS press office to section press officers. Can press officers ensure that this information is circulated to the relevant people in their section.

General enquiries from press officers should go to Paula and James at the IS Press Office, on Tel: +44 71 413 5562/5810.

Annual Report - 0006 hrs gmt, 8 July

(New Information)

Please note that the embargo time has been changed to 0006 hrs gmt, 8 July 1993. Annual Report publication, Worldwide Summary, Regional Summaries, Regional Updates, news release. All these materials, except the news release have been e-mailed/faxed/telexed to you and hard copies of the formatted version are being swift-aired to you. The news release should be ready to send next week.
Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

Document and news release to go with action on massive numbers of political killings.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 1 July

A weekly update item is being written to go with the document: Saudi Arabia: An Upsurge in Public Executions, AI Index: MDE 23/04/93. The document and weekly update item will be embargoed for 1 July and will be sent out to selected international media by the IS Press Office. Please note that the document has been sent out in the weekly mailing.

2. AMR 51/WU 06/93 EXTERNAL
9 June 1993

USA: COMMUTATION AND REPRIEVES GRANTED, BUT EXECUTIONS STILL LOOM AHEAD

Amnesty International has welcomed the commutation and temporary reprieves of three prisoners - Gary Graham, Bobby Lewis Shaw and Chuck Lee Mathenia - on death row in the USA, but remains concerned over the continued use of the death penalty.

Gary Graham, a juvenile offender who was due to be executed on 3 June 1993 in Texas, was granted a 30-day reprieve by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals on 2 June on a 5-4 ruling. The decision stayed his execution pending a decision on another appeal - *Johnson v Texas* - to the US Supreme Court. This appeal, submitted by Dorsie Johnson, a 19-year-old offender on death row in Texas, argues that the defendant's youth should have been considered by the jury as a mitigating circumstance when sentencing him. However, the Texas statute, as it stood at the time, did not allow for youth to be considered as a mitigating factor. The statute was changed in 1991 and now allows for the consideration of any mitigating circumstance to be taken into account.

Amnesty International said, "It is shocking that executions of juvenile offenders are being scheduled while the *Johnson* case is pending a decision before the US Supreme Court, as it could have a vital impact on the cases of juveniles and other young offenders on death row in Texas".

One of the issues presented to the court as grounds for granting clemency to Gary Graham concerned new evidence relating to his claim of innocence, but this was not considered by the court. The decision not to consider this point led to a dissenting opinion by Judge Frank Maloney, who said: "Where an arguably innocent person, wrongly convicted and sentenced to death, is wholly without a meaningful form in which to present newly discovered claims of innocence, this court should be compelled, as a matter of public policy, to provide sufficient safeguards to ensure that state and Federal constitutional protections are given effect".

In Missouri, Governor Mel Carnahan has commuted the death sentence of Bobby Lewis Shaw, who was scheduled to be executed on 9 June 1993. Shaw had been diagnosed as suffering from dementia, schizophrenia and brain damage, and found to be borderline mentally retarded.

Also in Missouri, Chuck Lee Mathenia's execution, due on 4 June, was stayed for 60 days on a recommendation by the Board of Pardons. The stay will allow his attorney to prepare a clemency petition. Chuck Lee Mathenia, sentenced to death in 1985 for the murder of two women, was represented at trial by an attorney who spent little time in the preparation of his case and failed to present mitigating evidence to the jury or call any witnesses for the defence. Mathenia had a history of being abused, mental retardation and alcohol related problems. Amnesty International has urged the relevant authorities to grant him clemency. His execution would contravene the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1989/64 which recommends "eliminating the death penalty for persons suffering from mental retardation or extremely limited mental competence".

"However, in stark contrast to these positive developments are the impending executions of another two juvenile offenders; Curtis Harris in Texas and Frederick Lashley in Missouri," said Amnesty International.

Both Curtis Harris and Frederick Lashley are black and were convicted and sentenced to death by all-white juries. They were 17-years-old at the time of the crimes for which they were convicted, and their executions would flout international standards which prohibit the imposition of the death penalty on offenders under 18. Harris was also a victim of abuse as a child and his skull still bears the indentation mark from being hit over the head by his father with a wooden board. Frederick Lashley was sentenced to death for the murder of his 55-year-old cousin who had brought him up after he was abandoned by his mother at the age of three.

If carried out, Curtis Harris' execution - due to take place on 1 July - will be the sixth execution of a juvenile offender in the USA since 1977 and the fourth in Texas under its present death penalty laws. Frederick Lashley would be the first juvenile offender to be executed in Missouri for more than 60 years; a date for his execution is expected to be set at any time now.

"The commutation and reprieves are welcome flashes of light in a very dark tunnel," Amnesty International said, "but the fact remains that the death penalty continues to be carried out, with 15 executions so far this year and 203 since 1977; it is still being used in a

racially discriminatory way; international standards are being flouted by its use on those under 18, the mentally ill and mentally retarded; the US Supreme Court's decisions have progressively narrowed the possibilities of appeal to prisoners under sentence of death; and, at state level, Texas - the state with the highest number of executions - has failed to provide any meaningful clemency process in capital cases".

3. AFR 34/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
9 June 1993

LIBERIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS KILLINGS

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by reports of the killing of about 300 people at Harbel, near the Liberian capital, Monrovia, on 6 June 1993.

A representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has described seeing the mutilated bodies of the victims in a workers' compound at the abandoned Firestone rubber plantation. The dead were displaced people who had fled from the armed conflict to a makeshift camp at the plantation. Several hundred others are reported to have been wounded at the time of the killings.

The UNHCR official stated that he had received numerous allegations that the killings were carried out by fighters of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, which is engaged in armed opposition to the Monrovia-based government of Amos Sawyer and the West Africa peace-keeping force in Liberia, ECOMOG. In recent weeks there have been several reports of NPFL fighters killing civilians to stop them from fleeing to territory held by ECOMOG forces or the government.

Charles Taylor is reported to have denied that his troops were responsible for the massacre and to have blamed Liberian armed groups which are fighting alongside ECOMOG forces. There appears to be little evidence to sustain these claims. Amnesty International is seeking further information in order to try and establish which forces carried out the killings and on whose orders.

Amnesty International has also received separate recent reports of killings of civilians or prisoners by two armed groups fighting alongside ECOMOG. In March 1993, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) reportedly summarily executed 14 young men suspected of supporting the NPFL at Zorzor in Lofa County and in a separate incident reportedly killed 13 civilians at Haindi, 80 kilometres from Monrovia.

Members of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) have been identified as responsible for the extrajudicial execution on 31 January 1993 of Brian Garnham, the manager of a research laboratory near Robertsfield international airport. Earlier Brian Garnham had written to the United Nations Special Envoy to Liberia, Trevor Gordon-Somers, alleging collaboration between ECOMOG troops and the AFL and ULIMO militias.

Amnesty International is calling on all parties to the Liberian conflict to respect human rights and observe basic international humanitarian standards. All the armed forces involved should issue clear public orders to their troops not to kill or torture prisoners or those who have not taken up arms. Amnesty International is extending this appeal to governments around the world, especially those with influence over the different armed factions in Liberia, urging them to protest at continuing human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict.