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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 79/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: INTERNAL - SOUTH AFRICA  
EXTERNAL - USA

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Hong Kong - 0600 hrs gmt, 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICES 71/94 AND 36/94  
Trade Unionists - 29 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62  
Saudi Arabia - 10 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62  
Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94  
China - 1 June - More details to follow

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Switzerland CAT - 19 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94

**\*\*Israel & OT CAT - 22 April\*\*** - PLEASE NOTE: The embargo date has been brought forward to Friday 22 April because Israel is coming before CAT on Monday 25 April. You can expect the news service item on the report tomorrow. The report being submitted to CAT was completed late, if you require a copy urgently please contact Katherine Ofori in the research team on 413 5641. She will be able to organize e-mailing or faxing the report to you. SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94

## FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 7 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

**INTERNAL**

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**FOR VERBAL RESPONSE ONLY**

**SOUTH AFRICA: UPDATE**

**On 18 April, South African police reportedly found four people, including a 14 year old boy, being held captive at the African National Congress' (ANC) Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) Regional Headquarters in Johannesburg. They reportedly received this information from a fifth prisoner who had managed to escape.**

**The police said that those detained appeared to have been seriously beaten, and that they claimed to belong to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Later in the day the ANC issued a statement saying that the ANC had not, as an organization, been involved in the detention of the men, but that a security guard had acted in a private capacity after his car had been broken into. The ANC said that the guard had been suspended and that they are cooperating with the police investigation into the matter.**

**Following this incident, it has been reported that the ruling National Party and the IFP have called upon the ANC to grant Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to all their offices.**

**Amnesty International condemns the use of torture in all instances. The human rights organization has reported publicly in the past on the use of torture, both by the South African Government security forces and by the ANC, and has appealed to both parties to carry out investigations in order to bring perpetrators to justice and to take steps to prevent the use of torture.**

**Amnesty International representatives are currently in South Africa.**

**During the past few days, Amnesty International's representatives have received reports from recent victims of torture by the security forces, both those held under section 29 of the Internal Security Act and others held by South African Defence Force (SADF) members on the East Rand.**

**Amnesty International has also received fresh reports of assaults by the Bophuthatswana Police in the past two weeks.**

**In addition, Amnesty International's representatives will now investigate the incident at the ANC's regional headquarters further.**

**Amnesty International expects to draw these reports to the attention of the relevant authorities in a detailed way in due course.**

**Amnesty International is calling for a full and independent investigation into all of these incidents.**

**Amnesty International is concerned about the widespread practice of torture in South Africa and the continuing use of legislation which facilitates torture occurring. The organization is urging all those contesting the national and provincial elections to commit themselves to a program of effective action to prevent torture, as well as other human rights abuses, if they should be elected.**

**ENDS/**

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**USA: POSSIBLE REINSTATEMENT OF DEATH PENALTY IN KANSAS**

**Joan Finney, Governor of Kansas, will soon decide whether to permit the passage of a bill which would reinstate the death penalty in the state, where there have been no executions since 1965.**

**Governor Finney personally opposes the death penalty but has said that if a death penalty bill is passed she would let it become law without her signature as she believes that it is the will of the people. The bill has passed both the state Senate and the House of Representatives and is currently being considered by Governor Finney. If she takes no action the bill will become law.**

**The human rights organization is urging Governor Finney to exercise leadership on this human rights issue and set an important example to other US state governors by vetoing the bill. "Kansas should not take such a retrograde step," Amnesty International said.**

**The bill proposes the death penalty as a possible sentence for persons over the age of 18 for specific types of intentional premeditated murder, such as the killing of a rape victim or a police officer.**

**Amnesty International, which is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty, considers that the reinstatement of the death penalty in Kansas would be contrary to international human rights standards and treaties which encourage governments to reduce the use of the death penalty with a view to its ultimate abolition.**

**Amnesty International is concerned that the death penalty is an arbitrary punishment which often falls disproportionately on minority and underprivileged groups. "The death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishment, it merely serves to brutalize all those who are involved in the process", the human rights organization said. "Execution is irrevocable, and despite the most stringent judicial safeguards, can be inflicted on the innocent".**

**This view recently received support from one of the top judicial officials in the United States, Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun, who has recently retired. In a dissenting opinion of a Texas death penalty case, he concluded that the death penalty in the USA, as it is currently administered, is unconstitutional and "remains fraught with arbitrariness, discrimination, caprice and mistake." He further stated: "...I feel morally and intellectually obliged simply to concede that the death penalty experiment has failed. It is virtually self-evident to me now that no combination of procedural rules or substantive regulations ever can save the death penalty from its inherent constitutional deficiencies," and "The problem is that the inevitability of factual, legal and moral error gives us a system that we know must wrongly kill some defendants."**

**ENDS/**