



Thousands arrested in Colombia

Massive political arrests took place in Colombia during the month of January. *AI* has received reports from local sources in Colombia and from other international organizations that more than 2,000 people were detained in the capital city of Bogota alone.

By early February, more than 300 people were reportedly being held incommunicado in the capital's police jails and military barracks. Those arrested include Christian leaders, members of left-wing opposition groups, independent trade unions, and a number of refugees from other Latin American countries.

The repression follows a recent arms robbery from the military armoury in Usaquen during the New Year holidays. The army is reported to have recovered more than 90 per cent of the arms stolen. However, government efforts to apprehend the perpetrators appear to have extended to include numerous people not involved in the robbery.

Among those arrested are the sociologist Orlando Fals BORDA and his wife, the television actor Carlos DUPLAT, the priests Saturnino SEPULVEDA and Jose Bernardo SORIANO, and the nationally-acclaimed pianist Teresita GOMEZ. Also in detention are two labour leaders and 27 other slum dwellers and workers belonging to the Jesuit-organized cooperative, *Programa de Empresas Comunitarias* (Program of Community Enterprises).

The Colombian government has

utilized the new Security Statute (*Decreto 1923, Estatuto de Seguridad* of 6 September 1978), promulgated almost immediately after the new administration of President Julio César TURBAY Ayala came to office in September 1978, pledging itself to "law and order" and the eradication of "subversion".

A broad spectrum of Colombians has condemned the new Security Statute, which one Supreme Court jurist has described as opening the way for a "constitutional dictatorship". In November 1978, the Supreme Court ordered the suspension of 103 lawyers in various parts of the country for speaking out against the Statute.

Since September 1978, numerous cases of torture have been reported, the most notorious of which was the alleged torture for five days of approximately 34 students at the *Brigada de Institutos Militares* (The Military Academy).

After the *Instituto de Medicina Legal* (The Institute of Forensic Science), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Justice, had concluded that torture had been inflicted on the 34 students, the Justice Minister demanded the resignation of the Director of the Medical Institute, Dr Odilio MENDEZ Sandoval.

Arrest and releases in China

A young woman who has been active in the movement calling for free speech in the People's Republic of China has been secretly arrested and has disappeared, according to wall posters in Peking.

Fu YUEHUA, aged 32, is reported to have been arrested on 18 January by the police in her district and not seen again. The wall posters, displayed on 25 January, describe her arrest as unconstitutional.

Fu Yuehua is said to have taken part in writing detailed and strongly-worded wall posters in the weeks preceding her arrest and to have supported the demands for democracy and human rights made in other wall posters in Peking since November 1978. She is also reported to have participated in a demonstration by peasants in the capital on 14 January.

On 26 January, *AI* cabled Premier Hua GUOFENG of the People's Republic of China, urging that Fu Yuehua be released unconditionally if reports about her arrest are correct.

- Three prisoners of conscience—known under the collective pseudonym *Li Yizhe*—were reported released in China on 1 January. The three, LI Zhengtian, CHEN Yiyang and WANG Xizhe, had been detained since 1975 for writing a wall poster and displaying it in Canton in November 1974 (June 1978 *Prisoners of the Month Campaign*).

ZANU releases four prisoners to AI

At a ceremony on 2 February in the Mozambique capital of Maputo, Robert MUGABE, President of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), released four civilians his forces had taken prisoner in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe during 1978.

The four prisoners—two Britons, a Rhodesian and a South African—were handed over to *AI* representatives who had been invited to Maputo for a special meeting of the Bureau of the

Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries on Southern Africa. The invitation, extended by the Mozambique Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of ZANU, indicated that the release of prisoners was possible.

AI was asked to facilitate arrangements for the unconditional release of the four prisoners and their departure from Mozambique. Although *AI* is not normally involved in this kind of assistance, it agreed to do so on this occasion in order to ensure the speedy release of the individuals concerned. The four said that they had been treated well by their captors.

• *AI* meets transitional government officials in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe

On their return from Mozambique, the *AI* delegates paid a brief visit to the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe capital of Salisbury where they met Executive Council members Bishop Abel MUZOREWA and Chief Jeremiah CHIRAU, the Joint Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Joint Ministers of Law and Order, and the Commissioner of Police. They explained *AI*'s work and concerns in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, and urged that ZANU's unconditional release of four prisoners should receive positive response from Salisbury.

Pakistan Worldwide appeal for clemency

In an appeal for clemency for Pakistan's former Premier Zulfikar Ali BHUTTO, Mian Muhammad ABBAS, Arshad IQBAL, Ghulam MUSTAFA and Rana Iftikar AHMAD, *AI* organized worldwide action appealing to President General ZIA ul-Haq to commute the death sentences passed on the five men.

AI's appeal, issued on 6 February, was an immediate response to the split decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, confirming the death sentences passed by the Lahore High Court in March 1978.

The five men were accused of the attempted assassination of one of Bhutto's political opponents, Ahmed Raza KASURI, in 1974—an incident in which Kasuri's father was killed.

AI, which opposes the death penalty in all cases, noted in its telegram that the trial had been conducted in a tense political atmosphere and that under such circumstances there was a "considerable risk of miscarriage of justice".

In its telegram to General Zia, *AI* pointed out that the evidence on which Bhutto and his associates were convicted was based almost entirely on the statements of alleged accomplices.

Although this is legal in Pakistan, an *AI* mission which visited the country in 1978 had expressed concern about the "considerable dangers of conviction without substantial corroborative evidence".

AI said it regretted that the last stage of the Lahore High Court trial was held *in camera*, prohibiting an objective assessment of the total defence and prosecution arguments by outside observers.

In its message to General Zia, *AI* pointed out that the international press and observers at the Supreme Court appeal hearings had expressed doubts about the impartiality of the first court which tried the defendants.

"Unfortunately, the Supreme Court did not re-examine witnesses and could not therefore investigate the defence claim that statements of prosecution witnesses were contradictory, that some have not been brought on record, and that evidence was taken down in a manner favourable to the prosecution," *AI* said. "Any such doubts can be removed only by a retrial of the accused."

The Supreme Court itself was divided on these questions and voted 4 to 3 to uphold Bhutto's sentence.

In 1976, when Bhutto himself was Prime Minister, *AI* published a 92-page report calling for the release of thousands of political prisoners in the country.

Guatemala Trade unionist on death list

A leading Guatemalan trade unionist whose name has been included on a list of people marked for assassination visited the International Secretariat of *AI* in London at the end of January.

Miguel Angel ALBIZURES, former Secretary General of Guatemala's *Central Nacional de Trabajadores* (Trade Union Central), was listed in a collective death threat issued by the country's *Ejército Secreto Anti-Comunista-ESA* (Secret Anti-Communist Army) which was published in the Guatemalan press on 18 October 1978. At the time, *AI* organized international action in an effort to protect those on the list which featured prominent union and student leaders, journalists, academics and labour lawyers.

One of those listed, Oliverio CASTAÑEDA, President of the Association of University Students, was killed on 20 October; killings of others on the death list followed. During the second week of January, ESA reportedly kidnapped Enrique CASTELLANOS, a labour leader and member of the Consultative Council of the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security.

ESA has also sent warning notes to leaders of every trade union in Guatemala that has collaborated with the National Trade Union Coordinating Committee of which Miguel Albizures is a founding member. One attempt has already been made on his life.

ESA became active in the wake of civil unrest in October 1978 which followed official proposals to increase transport prices by 100% and involved protests about inflation and the general decline of already poor living standards. Strikes and demonstrations organized by Albizures' committee, which had the support of government employees' emergency committees, university students and shanty-town dwellers, were violently repressed.

An estimated 1,500 people were detained, 300 wounded and some 40 people reportedly killed.

Miguel Albizures now plans to return to Guatemala. *AI* is concerned that his life remains in danger and that international attention and action on his behalf and on behalf of other potential victims are likely to be the most effective safeguard for their lives.

USSR

Three Armenians are executed

Three citizens from the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, convicted of causing a bomb explosion in the Moscow metro in January 1977, were executed on 30 January this year, according to reports appearing in the USSR press.

One of the three victims was Stepan ZADIKYAN, aged 33. According to the Soviet authorities, he was formerly a student at Yerevan University in the Armenian republic and was once a member of an Armenian nationalist group. The names of the other two victims are not known.

The death sentences were delivered on 26 January, after which *AI* appealed to President Leonid BREZHNEV to exercise his constitutional authority to grant clemency and commute the death sentences. *AI* opposes the death penalty in all cases on the grounds that it constitutes a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, is irrevocable

and is a violation of the "right to life" provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments.

Following the reports of the executions, *AI* sent a note to the USSR asking for the charges against the three men to be made public together with the grounds for their conviction. The trial is reported to have taken place in secret.

The infliction of the death penalty for offences committed with genuine or allegedly political motives is rare in the USSR. In testimony in October 1978 before the Human Rights Committee set up under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the USSR is a party, the representative of the Soviet government stated that the penalty is seldom applied in the country, pending its full abolition in the future.

Campaign for Prisoners of the Month

Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In *no* circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

Khamking SOUVANLASY, People's Democratic Republic of Laos

Khamking SOUVANLASY, 50-year-old former Director General of the Laotian Ministry of Education, has been detained without charge or trial for more than three years in a "re-education" camp in Sam Neua province in the north-east of Laos.

Khamking Souvanlasy is one of many officials and civil servants of the former administration in Laos who were sent to "re-education" camps by the new authorities when the coalition government, which had ruled Laos since 1973, was abolished in 1975.

In the spring of that year, the balance of power within the coalition government altered in favour of the left, which took control of the administration. "Political seminars" and "re-education" camps were set up for members of the previous "conservative" administration and others deemed to be in need of "political re-education". Most former officials who were sent to camps in 1975 are still detained or restricted.

Khamking Souvanlasy is a teacher by profession. Apart from four years spent abroad—including two years working for UNESCO in Bangkok, Thailand, from 1966 to 1968—he held positions of responsibility in the Laotian Ministry of Education until 1975.

In late November that year, members of various ministries, including Khamking Souvanlasy, were called for a "political re-education seminar" in Sam Neua province after which they were sent to various "re-education" camps in the province where they remain today. The authorities have not given any reasons for their continued detention; however, *AI* believes they were arrested because of their

past political activities or their position. Khamking Souvanlasy is not known to have either used or advocated violence.

Please send courteously worded letters appealing for the immediate and unconditional release of Khamking Souvanlasy, to: His Excellency Kaysone Phomvihane, Prime Minister, Vientiane, People's Democratic Republic of Laos.

Ciro Vélez MENDOZA, Ecuador

Ciro Vélez MENDOZA has been imprisoned since May 1973 when he was tried before a special tribunal created by the military government which seized power in Ecuador in February 1972.

At the time of his arrest in June 1972, he was associated with the *Partido Socialista Revolucionario Ecuatoriano* (Ecuadorian Socialist Revolutionary Party). Along with a number of prominent leftwing political personalities, he was charged with joint responsibility for nine different armed robberies and for the deaths that occurred in the course of some of the robberies.

The special tribunal handling this case initiated its inquiries long after the offences had been committed and, in some cases, after ordinary courts had tried and convicted other people for the crimes. During the trial, the accused were denied the right to defend themselves and were not permitted to make statements in court.

All the defendants alleged they had been tortured during interrogation, and in some instances medical doctors have supported their claim. Torture in each case appears to have been used to force the defendants to sign prefabricated confessions of criminal activity.

The special tribunal convicted all those on trial and handed down heavy prison sentences, some as long as 16 years. The leaders of all legal political parties in Ecuador called for the immediate suppression of the special tribunals and described them as an "instrument of political repression".

Following decisions of the country's Superior Military Court, all those sentenced have been released—with the exception of *Ciro Vélez Mendoza* who remains in the *Penitenciaría del Litoral* (Coastal Penitentiary) in Guayaquil. *AI* believes he was originally imprisoned for his political associations and has not been released due to delays caused by re-organization of the country's Justice Tribunals.

*Please send courteously worded letters appealing for the immediate release of *Ciro Vélez Mendoza*, to: Vicealmirante Alfredo Poveda Burbano, Presidente del Consejo Supremo de Gobierno, Palacio de Gobierno, Quito, Ecuador.*

Mohamed BEN KILANI, Tunisia

Mohamed BEN KILANI is one of numerous students arrested in Tunisia's capital city, Tunis, during the widespread anti-government demonstrations and strikes which took place in the spring of 1975. While in police detention he is reported to have been tortured in order to extract a confession and at one point he spent several days in a military hospital as a result of his treatment.

Ben Kilani, a 30-year-old student of science, was tried twice by the State Security Court in Tunis on charges of membership in a banned organization. During his first trial in July 1975, he was sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment. Following the second trial in September 1975, the State Security Court sentenced him to a further 7 years' imprisonment. Several lawyers representing international organizations who went to Tunisia to observe the trials were expelled from the country.

Ben Kilani is presently being detained in Bourj Er Roumi Prison near Bizerte, and is believed to be in poor health. (See story on *AI*'s concerns in Tunisia, page 8).

Please send courteously worded letters, preferably in French, urging the immediate release of Mohamed Ben Kilani, to: Son Excellence Habib Bourguiba, Président de la République, Tunis, Tunisia; and to: Son Excellence Salaheddin Baly, Ministre de la Justice, Tunis, Tunisia.

Amnesty International was founded in 1961 in the belief that responsibility for the protection of human rights transcends boundaries of nationality, race and belief. That principle has been strengthened in practice over the years by the international human rights standards adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and by the increasing attention paid to human rights by UN bodies. The following article outlines some questions of interest to AI which came up during the most recent session of the UN General Assembly. See inset box highlighting the latest report of the Human Rights Committee now functioning under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

United Nations: focus on human rights

Torture, disappeared people, imprisoned trade unionists and the development of regional human rights bodies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East were featured on the agenda of the 33rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations which was held in New York from September to December 1978.

Nicaragua and Democratic Kampuchea were singled out in general debate more than once for their record of alleged violations of human rights. On Chile, the Third Committee (which normally deals with political matters before they reach the General Assembly), received a lengthy report on the visit of the special UN working group to the country in July 1978 and a study on the impact of foreign economic aid and assistance to Chile on respect for human rights in that country.

The Third Committee asked the UN Commission on Human Rights to consider the need for clarifying the fate of missing and disappeared people in Chile. In a separate resolution, the General Assembly approved the establishment of a UN trust fund for victims of repression and their families.

Following an initiative from Ghana, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing that everyone has a right to refuse service in military or police forces which are used to enforce *apartheid*. Under the resolution, conscientious objectors compelled to leave their country for refusing such service would be granted asylum or safe transit and guaranteed refugee rights by other nations.

On the question of the abolition of torture, the General Assembly requested that high priority be given to the drafting of a convention against torture and urged more states to make unilateral declarations that they would abide by the 1975 Declaration on the



At the end of the recent 33rd session of the UN General Assembly, delegates observed the 30th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. AI was among recipients of the UN Human Rights prizes. The award was received on behalf of AI by Suriya Wickremasinghe from the Sri Lanka section. "Today must be a day of determination—to see that the commitment to human dignity proclaimed in the Declaration becomes a living reality in the daily lives of people everywhere," she said.

Protection of All Persons from Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. A special working group of the Human Rights Commission is already meeting in Geneva to finalize the text of the convention.

The General Assembly also discussed a Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials which it is hoped will be adopted at the next session. A formal working group will be established to facilitate passage of the code. An informal working group had started preparation of a further draft of the code, stipulating that no law enforcement official may invoke superior orders as a justification for torture.

One of the most important resolutions adopted by the General Assembly concerned the fate of "disappeared persons" in general. It was the result of a joint Canadian and United Kingdom initiative. The resolution called on governments to undertake speedy, impartial investigations into cases of disappearances; to cooperate with

inter-governmental organizations and humanitarian bodies in searching for those who have disappeared; and to ensure that each country's law enforcement and security agencies are fully accountable for their actions. The General Assembly also requested the UN Commission on Human Rights to take up the question of "the disappeared".

At its 32nd session, the General Assembly had appealed to states to consider establishing regional machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights in areas where no such mechanisms exist at present. Now, provision has been made for a seminar on this question to be held in Africa during 1979. Resources are available for 54 participants selected by the UN Division of Human Rights to attend, together with four representatives from recognized liberation movements.

Pursuing an earlier decision to protect "certain categories" of prisoners, the General Assembly turned to the specific situation of imprisoned trade

1978 Report of the Human Rights Committee

The Human Rights Committee, established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has received 40 communications submitted by or on behalf of individuals who claim to be victims of violations of rights set forth in the Covenant.

The communications concern citizens in Canada, Denmark, Finland, Mauritius, Norway, Uruguay and Zaire.

These countries are among the 21 which thus far have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. Under the Optional Protocol, the Human Rights Committee can deal with individual complaints, if the individual's government has ratified the Protocol.

Of the 40 communications submitted to the Committee, seven have been declared admissible and are now under consideration. Twenty-five communications are still before the committee pending final decision as to their admissibility. The remaining communications have either failed to conform to the requirements of the Optional Protocol or have been withdrawn.

These details are contained in the Report of the Human Rights Committee for 1978, submitted on 22 November to the United Nations General Assembly. The 123-page report outlines the work of the Committee during the year and consists mainly of detailed accounts of the reports made by 16 states on their compliance with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The 16 countries whose representatives reported to and faced questions from the Committee were: Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Sweden, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, United Kingdom, Norway, Madagascar, Iran, Federal Republic of Germany, Yugoslavia, Jordan, USSR, Mauritius, Byelorussian SSR, and Ecuador.

Each of the 16 representatives was first required to present a written report to the Committee on the status of civil and political rights in their country. They were then asked extensive questions, for example, about the way in which their citizens were protected from torture, about freedom of conscience and association, about guarantees to ensure fair trials, and about the use of capital punishment. The representatives' replies are summarized in the Committee's report.

The Human Rights Committee itself consists of 18 members, all of whom serve strictly in their individual capacity; they are not representatives of governments. As such, they are freed from many of the restraints felt within the political bodies of the United Nations.

According to the Committee's report, as of 15 December 1978 there were 52 states parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. *AI* is currently campaigning to secure ratification of the Covenant and its Optional Protocol (as well as of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) by all governments throughout the world.

United Nations: focus on human rights (continued from previous page)

unionists. It reaffirmed the importance of protecting the right to freedom of association and urged all governments to release people who may be detained or arrested for trade union activities. It was stipulated that, pending the release of such prisoners, their fundamental rights should be protected and that fair trials and freedom from torture should be ensured.

AI's representative at the United Nations in New York, Margo Picken, reports that it was possible to detect

from the debates the consolidation of the consensus that human rights are indivisible and may be looked at from an international point of view as well as from a national one.

In his annual report to the General Assembly, UN Secretary General Dr Kurt Waldheim commented: "There is growing acceptance of the principle that recognition and promotion of the worth and dignity of every human being is a legitimate concern of the world community"•

Tanzania

Zanzibar prisoners released

In December 1978 all 14 remaining Tanzanian prisoners serving sentences passed at the Zanzibar "Treason Trial" in 1974 were released. All these prisoners were originally sentenced to death, but the sentences were later reduced to 10 years' imprisonment. The arrests took place in April 1972 immediately after the assassination of President Abeid KARUME•

Iraq

Christians arrested

Nearly 200 Christians are reported to have been arrested in Iraq in mid-November 1978; earlier unconfirmed reports put the figure at 600. There has been no official explanation for the arrests and all access to the detainees was denied while they were being interrogated.

Those arrested included members of Iraq's Assyrian Christian community, of an evangelical society, and of a Bible study group in the town of Basra.

Among the Christian foreign nationals who were also arrested were citizens of the United Kingdom, Norway, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Switzerland, the Arab Republic of Egypt, and Lebanon.

According to *AI* information, the Christians were arrested for holding religious meetings which the government considered "irregular", for evangelizing, and for having illegal contact with foreigners. However, some were later charged with espionage.

Iraq's Christian community consists of about 500,000 people, or four per cent of the country's population. Most of the Assyrian Christians were apparently arrested at a weekly meeting where their national language, Syriac, is taught. Sixty members of the evangelical society were arrested when security police broke into a home where a foreign national was preaching.

On 16 January, *AI* asked President Ahmad Hassan Al BAKR to confirm a recent report that all the Iraqi Christians had been released, or to supply details about the detainees, the charges against them, and pending trials, if any. *AI* also expressed concern about detention procedures and allegations of torture during interrogation. *AI* now understands that a considerable majority of those detained have been released. (See also story on arrest of Communist Party members in Iraq, page 7)•

Mexico

Gov't comments on disappearances

More than 300 people have disappeared in Mexico since 1972, apparently after being detained by government forces. However, at a news conference on 24 January, Mexican Attorney General, Oscar Flores SANCHEZ, is reported to have claimed that 154 of those missing have been killed in clashes with the police and the army and that the rest are either dead or in hiding.

Following the Attorney General's statement, *AI* cabled the Mexican government urging that, in view of the "continued uncertainty and grief of the numerous families affected", the next-of-kin of those reportedly killed should be informed of the exact circumstances in which the deaths occurred and the bodies returned to the families for burial.

AI also asked for clarification of Señor Sanchez' reported denial that the government was connected with the

paramilitary brigades (*brigadas blancas*). The brigades are said to have been formed from combined special forces of the police and army and are believed to be responsible for the abduction of students, peasants and labour leaders in the country.

AI called on the Mexican government to set up an independent commission of inquiry to examine individually the cases of the disappeared people, and to publish a full report of its findings and conclusions.

In 1978 the Mexican government gave assurances that it would investigate fully the cases of missing people presented to it by *AI*, and would communicate the findings to the organization. However, the only response so far has been the Attorney General's statement during the news conference.

Taiwan

Opposition leader arrested

A prominent elderly opposition leader in Taiwan, YU Teng-fa, and his son, YU Juei-yen, were arrested in the early hours of 21 January and accused of "planning sedition", a charge which can carry the death penalty under martial law in Taiwan.

The day after the arrests, a government statement claimed that Yu, aged 77, and his son had been "recruited" by a suspected communist spy, WU Tai-an, who is reported to have confessed during his military trial in January to "recruiting" the father and son.

However, information so far available to *AI* indicates that Yu, a former magistrate, has not been involved in violent or criminal activities and that his active role in the opposition in recent months is probably the real reason for his arrest.

At the time of his arrest, Yu was a

member of a group which on 25 December 1978 issued a political program calling for general liberalization of politics and an end to martial law in Taiwan. The group issued its call following the decision of the government of Taiwan to postpone indefinitely the partial elections scheduled for 23 December. The postponement came after the announcement by the United States of America that it was to establish full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, and to break diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Republic of China).

The opposition group had planned to call a convention of local opposition leaders in February to endorse its program.

At the end of January, *AI* appealed to the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Yu Teng-fa and his son and to announce the precise charges against them or release the two immediately.

STOP PRESS

News of Past Campaigns

AI has just learnt of the release of **Ciro MOLINA, Nicaragua (January Campaign for Prisoners of the Month).** Please stop all action on his behalf.

Jamaica

Death penalty debated

The Jamaican parliament has recommended a review of the cases of 79 people awaiting execution in Jamaican jails, after rejecting moves to abolish the death penalty in the country.

In a free vote on 31 January, parliament voted 24 to 19 to keep the death penalty despite a plea for its abolition by Prime Minister Michael MANLEY.

Prior to the debate *AI* urged Prime Minister Manley and other government leaders to make use of the debate to lead Jamaica and other English-speaking Caribbean states toward total abolition of the death penalty.

In a statement issued on 29 January, *AI* pointed to the 1975 report of a commission of inquiry set up by the Jamaican Prime Minister, which emphasized the terror imposed by the state on prisoners awaiting execution. The report argued against the effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent:

"This team questions fundamentally the use of hangings as a deterrent against murder, or a deterrent against violent crime. We feel that most men who commit the crime of murder can be adequately rehabilitated to lead normal productive lives. It is felt by this team that hanging as a punishment is regarded by most people as a revenge and does not serve the purpose for which it was devised."

AI welcomes these findings and believes that whatever social problems or crime rates a society may face, the death penalty is neither a practical nor a moral solution.

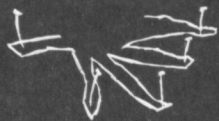
Prisoner Releases and Cases

The International Secretariat learned in January of the release of 123 prisoners under adoption or investigation and took up 126 new cases. During the entire year 1978, the International Secretariat learned of the release of 2,037 prisoners under adoption or investigation and took up 1,888 new cases.

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amnesty international

campaign for the abolition of torture

appeals

Amnesty International opposes the torture of prisoners in all cases, wherever and whenever it is practised. Any act of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is a violation of the international human rights standards unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. International appeals can help to alleviate the plight of prisoners being subjected to cruel treatment. Your letters should follow carefully the instructions given below.

Iraq

Communists arrested and tortured

Members of the Communist Party of Iraq—whose activities are not illegal—are being arrested in growing numbers and subjected to torture, according to reports reaching *AI* during recent months. Unofficial sources claim that several thousand have been arrested.

AI has so far received the names of 42 of those arrested. They include members of the central committee of the party, trade union activists, members of a publishing house, teachers, students, artists and poets.

In many cases torture is apparently being used to force detainees to leave the Communist Party or to become informers against the party which, since it was founded in 1934, has been frequently persecuted. Its activities were legalized in 1972—though prohibited in the armed forces—when it joined in the Progressive National Front with the ruling Baath Party and various Kurdish parties.

Two prisoners are reported to have died as a result of torture. Hameed 'ATI, a member of the Communist Party who was married with two children, died on 3 September 1978. 'Ati is reported to have been suspended from a ceiling fan while it was in motion, beaten all over his body with wire truncheons and electrocuted. Adnan Abdul AL JABBAR, a Communist Party sympathizer, died in a Baghdad hospital on 1 October 1978. He is reported to have been beaten by truncheons, suspended by his feet and had a wire baton inserted into his anus. This treatment led to a kidney failure and death. Another, Suleiman Yousef ISTIFAN, a member of the central committee of the Communist Party who has now been

released, is reported to be in a severely weakened condition because of his treatment in prison.

Torture techniques reported to be currently in use include:

- beating with rubber truncheons and hoses;
- electric shocks;
- extraction of finger or toe nails;
- application of pressure on the chest and stomach by means of a machine called *mangana*;
- suspension by hands or feet from a ceiling fan in motion;
- sexual assaults, or threats of rape, on the detainee or female relatives;
- burning with cigarettes;
- submersion of the head in water;
- filling the prisoner's room with gas until he faints;
- psychological torture involving the threat of death.

Please send courteously worded letters expressing concern at reports that large numbers of alleged Communist Party supporters have been detained and subjected to torture in recent months. Urge the unconditional release of all those detained for their non-violent political beliefs or activities. Seek assurances that all those detained are protected from ill-treatment. Request an open and impartial investigation of the deaths of Hameed 'Ati and Adnan Abdul Al Jabbar.

Write to: Field Marshal Ahmad Hassan Al Bakr, President of the Republic of Iraq, Baghdad, Republic of Iraq; *and to:* General Saddam Hussein, Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, Baghdad, Republic of Iraq.

Uruguay Family in secret detention

Four members of one family are being held incommunicado at unknown detention centers in Uruguay and are likely to be undergoing prolonged interrogation under torture.

On 2 November 1978, police searched the apartment of 21-year-old Ronny STEFFEN and arrested him without explanation in the presence of his pregnant wife. Two days later, his 56-year-old father Hermann STEFFEN Artigue who is of German parentage was arrested by security forces in Montevideo together with his wife, Marta ROMAN. Within a few days, Ronny Steffen's mother (Hermann Steffen's former wife), Carmen Potancia AGUIRRE CHAVEZ, was also arrested.

A fifth member of the family, Christina de Steffen, has been held since 1976 in Punta de Rieles prison, Montevideo. It is believed that all these detentions are connected with the previous activities of Christina's husband, 22-year-old Hermann Steffen, who is now a political refugee in Europe.

In Uruguay a detainee may be taken on arrest to a military barracks or a private house used as an interrogation center, or to the *Dirección Nacional de Información e Inteligencia* (DNII). The DNII is under the control of the Police Headquarters. The prisoner is usually held incommunicado and the family are generally not informed of his or her whereabouts. The period of incommunicado detention may range from a few weeks to many months and during this period torture is practised systematically, at times resulting in the deaths of the victims.

Please write courteously worded letters asking the Uruguayan authorities to provide information on the place of detention and charges against detained members of the Steffen family, and to provide assurances that they will be protected from ill-treatment.

Write to: Señores Comandantes en Jefe de las Fuerzas Armadas, Avenida 8 de Octubre y Garibaldi, Montevideo, Uruguay.

More trials expected

Trade Unionists in Tunisian Prisons

Inside the massive steel gateway which separates the Civil Prison in Tunis from daily life in the capital city around it, the prison population has been increased by the arrival of some of the country's most distinguished trade union leaders.

Among them is Ismail SAHBANI who, until the time of his arrest in January 1978, was the Secretary General of the Tunisian Federation of Metalworkers. He is now serving a sentence of 5 years' imprisonment with hard labour, after being tried with other trade union leaders by the State Security Court in Tunis in October 1978.

The 32-year-old father of two young children was arrested after the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) called a one-day strike on 26 January 1978.

'The swing' torture

While in the hands of the police, it is alleged, Ismail Sahbani was tortured by being hung naked from an iron bar inserted behind his knees and stretched across two tables. His wrists and ankles were tied together so that his torso then swung helplessly upside down with his head a few inches from the floor. While in this position, he was severely beaten by his interrogators. Similar allegations have been made by the other trade unionists arrested with Ismail Sahbani; they say this particular torture technique is nicknamed "the swing". They allege that they were also beaten on the soles of their feet, ribs and genitals.

As a result of his treatment in custody, Ismail Sahbani developed respiratory problems and a stomach ailment. However, he was transferred to an isolation cell in Tunis Prison where, in April and in June 1978, he went on a hunger strike. After being shifted between a cell for criminal prisoners and an isolation cell, he ended up in July in a cell with other detained trade unionists. Three months later, his trial began.

State Security Court

The trial, in which 30 members of the executive and administrative committees of the UGTT faced charges of conspiracy against the internal security of the state, captured international



Leaders of the General Union of Tunisian Workers. Right to left: Mohamed Ezzedine (now serving 5 years' imprisonment), Kheiredine Salhi (8 years), Taieb Baccouche (6 years), Hassen Hammoudia (8 years), Habib Achour (10 years), Mohamed Salah Ben Kaddour (6 years), Mustapha Gharbi (6 years), Abdelhamid Belaid (5 years); Sadok Allouche was acquitted and Abdelaziz Bouraoui was given a suspended sentence of 6 months' imprisonment.

attention. The right to form trade unions and the right to strike are guaranteed in Tunisian law, and the decision to put the trade union leaders on trial before the State Security Court highlighted the fact that the government clearly saw the matter as a political case.

The one-day general strike, which led to the arrests of the trade union leadership and thousands of their members, was the culmination of union criticism of the Tunisian government's economic policies. In January 1977, a social pact had been agreed to by the unions and the government. The government would improve working conditions and guarantee fair wages; the unions undertook to encourage increased productivity and not to strike. But by the end of the year, prices of basic commodities, including food, rose while wages failed to keep pace. Dissension within the government of Prime Minister Hedi NOUIRA led to the formation of a new cabinet in December 1977 which adopted a harsh line in dealing with trade union opposition to government policy.

At the State Security Court trial, the state prosecutor demanded the death penalty for all the 30 defendants. An *AI* observer was turned away from the court (December 1978 *Newsletter*).

The original 76 lawyers for the defence withdrew from the court in protest against the conduct of the trial. Twenty-four of the defendants were convicted. Sentences ranged from 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour to a 6 months' suspended sentence. Most have been sent to the Tunis Civil Prison, along with Ismail Sahbani.

Habib ACHOUR and Abderrazak GHORBAL, two leaders of the UGTT, however, are being held in appalling conditions in Nador Prison, near Bizerte on the country's north coast. Other prisoners adopted by *AI* who have been held for long periods in the prison's damp and poorly ventilated cells are reported to have developed rheumatism and tuberculosis.

At least 12 other trade unionists are still awaiting trial before the State Security Court.

AI groups are now working to secure the immediate and unconditional release of the convicted men and are pressing the government to bring prison conditions into line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

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