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## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

### **NEWS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

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#### **Contents:**

##### **Amnesty International reports & statements**

##### **News articles**

- Children
- Death Penalty
- Health Services
- Health Workers
- HIV/AIDS
- Malaria, TB and Other Diseases
- Mental Health
- Prisons/Policing
- Refugees and Migrants
- Sexual and Reproductive Rights
- Torture
- Violence against Women

##### **Conferences/Seminars/Courses**

##### **Publications**

#### **Amnesty International reports & statements:**

**3 December:** Mauritania: Government guilty of routine torture

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/mauritania-government-guilty-routine-torture-20081203>

**1 December:** South Africa pledges to make HIV and AIDS a priority

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/good-news/south-africa-pledges-make-hiv-and-aids-priority-20081201>

**27 November:** Iraq: Security agreement puts detainees at risk of torture

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/iraq-security-agreement-puts-detainees-risk-torture-20081127>

**27 November:** Haiti: No protection for girls against sexual violence

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/haiti-no-protection-girls-against-sexual-violence-20081127>

**26 November:** Jamaica: More executions will not reduce crime

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/jamaica-more-executions-will-not-reduce-crime-20081126>

**25 November:** China: Stop the execution of Wo Weihan

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/people039s-republic-china-stop-execution-wo-weihan-20081125>

**21 November:** Zimbabwe's health system is on the verge of total collapse

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/zimbabwes-health-system-chaos-20081121>

**20 November:** UN General Assembly reinforces call for moratorium on executions

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/un-general-assembly-reinforces-call-moratorium-executions-20081120>

**19 November:** Sri Lankan government must act now to protect 300,000 displaced

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/sri-lankan-government-must-act-now-protect-300000-displaced-20081119>

**18 November:** President-elect Obama re-commits to closing Guantanamo and ending torture

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/president-elect-obama-recommits-closing-guantanamo-ending-torture-20081118>

**17 November:** Israeli army relaxes restrictions on humanitarian aid to Gaza

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/news-and-updates/israeli-army-relaxes-restrictions-humanitarian-aid-gaza-20081117>

**13 November:** Afghanistan moves towards a wide use of executions

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/afghanistan-moves-towards-wide-use-executions-20081113>

**13 November:** Armenia: Women suffer in silence

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/armenia-women-suffer-silence-20081113>

**11 November:** Fighting in Democratic Republic of Congo causes humanitarian tragedy

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/fighting-democratic-republic-congo-causes-humanitarian-tragedy-20081111>

**8 November:** Indonesia: Make today's executions the last

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/indonesia-make-today039s-executions-last-20081108>

## **Children:**

**Afghanistan:** Children are being killed, exploited and abused in ever-increasing numbers in Afghanistan as the violence across the conflict-ridden country worsens. *UN News Centre* (21 November): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29042&Cr=afghan&Cr1=>

**Afghanistan:** Attackers in Afghanistan have sprayed acid in the faces of at least 15 girls near a school in Kandahar, police say. *BBC* (12 November): [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7724505.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7724505.stm)

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** Fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has forced most schools in Rutshuru territory to close, leaving an estimated 150,000 children out of class, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said. *IRIN* (14 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81468>

**International:** Access to education is a basic human right, but one not enjoyed by over 75 million children across the world. Many factors hamper children's school attendance in the developing world, but for children with disabilities the barriers are much higher. *The Guardian* (24 November): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/journalismcompetition/blind-children>

**International:** HIV-positive infants who begin receiving antiretroviral therapy immediately after being diagnosed with the virus are 76% less likely to die than HIV-positive infants who do not receive treatment until the disease has progressed, according to a study published Thursday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. *Medical News Today* (21 November): <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/130356.php>

**International:** The protection of children from sexual exploitation must be placed in the broader context of the promotion and protection of all children's rights, Bacre Ndiaye, Director, the Human Rights Council and Treaties Division of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), tells participants of the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *OHCHR* (November): <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/fightingSexualExploitationChildren.aspx>

**International:** Up to one in 10 children are thought to be victims of maltreatment in high-income countries, experts said, warning that child abuse is much more widespread than most people think. *Health 24* (3 December): [http://www.health24.com/news/Child\\_safety/1-943,44244.asp](http://www.health24.com/news/Child_safety/1-943,44244.asp)

**International:** The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is gaining growing visibility as a global reality. Worldwide, children are suffering from the effects of trafficking, pornography, prostitution, rape and abuse. *UNICEF* (24 November): [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/brazil\\_46520.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/brazil_46520.html)

**International:** A new report from four UN agencies entitled 'Children and AIDS: Third Stocktaking Report, 2008' is advocating for increased HIV testing for newborns as young as six-weeks-old. *UNICEF* (1 December) [http://www.unicef.org/aids/index\\_46650.html](http://www.unicef.org/aids/index_46650.html)

**Middle East:** The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has launched an initiative to combat violence in its schools across the Middle East by teaching children tolerance and conflict resolution. *IRIN* (26 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81666>

**Nepal:** Nepalese police allegedly tortured children in their custody, an international rights group said, calling the practice widespread and asking the government to punish the officers involved. *The Associated Press* (19 November): [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gYw6IJB7WjNCrS5jgWg30q2\\_BoSQD9410DLGO](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gYw6IJB7WjNCrS5jgWg30q2_BoSQD9410DLGO)

**Sweden:** A new report from Save the Children and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm has reignited debate in Sweden over whether several hundred children of asylum seekers had a psychiatric syndrome or whether their parents were fabricating or exaggerating their symptoms to win the right to stay in the country. *BMJ* (1 December): [http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/extract/337/dec01\\_2/a2818?paperoc](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/extract/337/dec01_2/a2818?paperoc)

**USA:** The U.S. has revised its count of juveniles ever held at Guantanamo Bay to 12, up from the eight it reported in May to the United Nations, a Pentagon spokesman said Sunday. *The Associated Press* (16 November): <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/nov/16/us-acknowledges-it-held-12-juveniles-at-guantanamo/>

**Yemen:** A four year conflict between government forces and Shia rebels in the northern governorate of Saada has caused psychological problems for children and had an adverse effect on their behaviour, according to a new study. *IRIN News* (23 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81623>

## Death Penalty:

**Afghanistan:** The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed dismay at the execution of at least five convicted prisoners in Afghanistan this week. *BBC* (11 November): [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7723612.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7723612.stm)

**Burundi:** Burundi's parliament has overwhelmingly agreed to abolish the death penalty. *AFP* (22 November): <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5h-3WcJkCR9P8Y6INSbWCEI5LPr9A>

**Jamaica:** Human-rights lobby, Amnesty International, has joined voices globally advising the Jamaican Government to remove the death penalty from its books. *The Jamaica Gleaner News* (21 November): <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20081121/news/news2.html>

**Jamaica:** Jamaica's parliament has voted to keep the death penalty, as the Caribbean nation struggles to contain one of the world's highest murder rates. *BBC News* (25 November): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7749207.stm>

**Japan:** There are currently 103 people on death row in Japan. Opposition to capital punishment has been meek in this country, but in recent years the movement toward at least a moratorium, if not a ban, has gained some momentum. *The Japan Times* (30 November): <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/rss/fl20081130rp.html>

**Palestine:** The Hamas government is planning to send Gaza's High Court of Justice the petitions of families calling on the government to impose death sentences on people convicted of murdering their kin or of being accessories to their murder. *The Haaretz* (24 November): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1040248.html>

**USA:** The North Carolina Supreme Court heard arguments on whether the state's Medical Board can sanction doctors who participate in an execution. The Board forbids physician participation in executions as a violation of the medical code of ethics. *WRAL News* (18 November): <http://www.wral.com/news/local/story/3979295/>

## Health Services:

**Africa:** Health systems on the continent are riddled with inadequate policies, strategies, lack of institutional capacity, poor scientific review mechanisms and weak funding for research in the public and private sector, said Luis Sambo, regional director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Africa. *IPS* (18 November): <http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=44755>

**Papua New Guinea:** More and more families are pooling funds to seek treatment overseas as the country witnesses a steep rise in cancer cases, which cannot be treated locally as health facilities are insufficient. *IRIN* (11 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81396>

**Swaziland:** Moved by the deplorable conditions he found on a tour of Swaziland's hospitals and clinics, Prime Minister Sibusiso Dlamini has vowed to reform the healthcare system. *IRIN* (14 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81481>

**Zimbabwe:** Truckloads of riot police were deployed outside Harare's main hospital on Tuesday to prevent scores of doctors and nurses from marching in protest at the state of Zimbabwe's collapsing health system. *Heath 24* (18 November): [http://www.health24.com/news/Health\\_care/1-918.48720.asp](http://www.health24.com/news/Health_care/1-918.48720.asp)

## Health Workers:

**Afghanistan:** Thousands of trained, volunteer health workers are to be mobilised to provide health care in rural areas this winter. *IRIN* (16 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81440>

**Egypt:** Egypt has lifted a ban imposed last month on its doctors taking up jobs in Saudi Arabia after two doctors were ordered jailed and flogged in the conservative kingdom, local media reported on Wednesday. *Arab Times* (3 December): <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/client/pagesdetails.asp?nid=25653&ccid=18>

**Zimbabwe:** Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and Zimbabwean health professionals warned of a public health catastrophe in Zimbabwe and urged an international crisis response. *PHR* (19 November): <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/news-2008-11-19.html>

**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe riot police wielding batons broke up protests by union members, doctors and nurses on Wednesday and the death toll from a cholera epidemic rose to 565 in the spiralling crisis. *Reuters* (3 December): <http://africa.reuters.com/top/news/usnJOE4B208I.html>

## HIV/AIDS:

**Afghanistan:** With 504 recorded cases, Afghanistan has a relatively low number of confirmed HIV cases, but experts on the disease are raising alarm bells for an expected rise in reported numbers, especially among street children. *UNICEF* (1 December): [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_46717.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_46717.html)

**Africa:** Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are looking at a new way of preventing HIV infections: criminal charges. But experts argue that applying criminal law to HIV transmission will achieve neither criminal justice nor curb the spread of the virus; rather, it will increase discrimination against people living with HIV, and undermine public health and human rights. *IRIN Plus News* (December): <http://www.plusnews.org/InDepthMain.aspx?InDepthId=77&ReportId=81756>

**Africa:** Africa's economic growth could suffer from the knock-on effect of more people dying from HIV/AIDS if donors cut funding for prevention because of the global financial crisis, the World Bank said. *Reuters* (3 December): <http://africa.reuters.com/wire/news/usnL3504886.html>

**Burkina-Faso:** HIV-positive people are forcing relief organisations in Burkina Faso to take another look at local foods to keep people healthy. *IRIN Plus News* (19 November): <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81559>

**Guinea:** With an HIV infection rate of 5.2 per cent, the lucrative mining sector in Guinea is particularly at risk from the epidemic. *IRIN* (28 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81724>

**International:** An increasing number of countries worldwide are making spreading HIV a crime, according to a new report from the International Planned Parenthood Federation. *Health 24* (13 November): [http://www.health24.com/news/HIV\\_AIDS/1-920,48674.asp](http://www.health24.com/news/HIV_AIDS/1-920,48674.asp)

**International:** As the global financial crisis raises the spectre of cutbacks in AIDS funding, countries need to start being more strategic about how they spend their AIDS budgets. *IRIN Plus News* (2 December): <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81777>

**International:** Universal HIV testing and immediate antiretroviral (ARV) drugs could reduce new infections in high-prevalence countries by as much as 95 percent within ten years, according to a new study by scientists from the UN World Health Organisation (WHO). *IRIN Plus News* (27 November): <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81701>

**International:** Governments across the globe pledged to step up the fight against HIV, combating the stigma associated with the disease and promising to bankroll treatment programmes. *Health 24* (2 December): [http://www.health24.com/news/HIV\\_AIDS/1-920,48923.asp](http://www.health24.com/news/HIV_AIDS/1-920,48923.asp)

**Kenya:** HIV-positive prisoners in Kenya not only suffer isolation from friends and family, but also within the prison walls. *IRIN Plus News* (21 November): <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81612>

**Lesotho:** Lesotho's drive to test all of its citizens age 12 or older for the virus that causes AIDS fell short of its goals, both in carrying out the program and in safeguarding the rights of those tested, said Human Rights Watch and the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa in a new report released today. *Human Rights Watch* (18 November): <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/11/18/lesotho-safeguard-rights-hiv-testing>

**South Africa:** A new study estimates that more than 330,000 HIV-positive South Africans lost their lives between 2000 and 2005 as a direct result of government delays in rolling out a treatment programme. *IRIN Plus News* (7 November): <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81358>

**South Africa:** Outgoing UNAIDS director Dr Peter Piot praises new spirit of unity in South Africa's AIDS response, as health minister says ARV waiting lists must be shortened. *Health-e* (1 December): <http://www.health-e.org.za/news/article.php?uid=20032148>

**South-East Asia:** The growing number of people crossing boundaries in South-East Asia searching for economic opportunity puts millions at risk to HIV infection with little or no protection or access to services, according to a United Nations report launched today. *UN News Centre* (13 November): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28933&Cr=HIV+AIDS&Cr1=asia>

**Uganda:** AIDS activists in Uganda have slammed a proposed new law that will force HIV-positive people to reveal their status to their sexual partners, and also allow medical personnel to reveal someone's status to their partner. *IRIN Plus News* (24 November): <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81636>

## **Malaria, TB and Other Diseases:**

**International:** The fight against infectious diseases such as Avian influenza will receive a boost today with the official opening of the China-Australia Centre for Phenomics Research at The Australian National University. *Medical News Today* (24 November): <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/130549.php>

**International:** An international aid agency will spend \$2.75 billion over the next two years to fight Aids, tuberculosis and malaria in 140 countries, an official said. *Health 24* (11 November): [http://www.health24.com/news/Health\\_care/1-918,48643.asp](http://www.health24.com/news/Health_care/1-918,48643.asp)

**International:** Doctors may soon be able to diagnose inherited diseases such as cystic fibrosis, thalassaemia and sickle cell anaemia in foetuses by simply testing a blood sample taken from the mother. *Health 24* (26 November): <http://www.health24.com/news/Genetics/1-916,48827.asp>

**Uganda:** Scientists said an outbreak of Ebola that killed 37 people in Uganda last year was sparked by a hitherto unknown species of one of the world's most notorious viruses. *Health 24* (21 November): <http://www.health24.com/news/Malaria/1-925,48765.asp>

**Uganda:** There has been an upsurge in the number of malaria cases reported in the sub-region of Lango in northern Uganda due to poor mosquito control, according to health officials. *IRIN* (19 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81558>

**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe is on the brink of collapse as an outbreak of cholera spreads. *The Guardian* (25 November): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/25/zimbabwe-internationalaidanddevelopment>

## **Mental Health:**

**International:** The criminalisation and incarceration of people with mental illness is a human rights issue in need of urgent attention in countries around the world, particularly in Africa and Asia. *IOL News* (22 November): [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=125&art\\_id=vn20081122082858813C598444](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=125&art_id=vn20081122082858813C598444)

**Ireland:** A leading consultant psychiatrist has expressed concern about the passing of the recent emergency mental health legislation in the Dáil, as it will lead to more mental health tribunals. *Irish Medical News* (10 November): <http://www.irishmedicalnews.ie/index.php/current-issue/news/1-news/431-more-mental-health-tribunals-because-of-legislation>

**UK:** This country is becoming a better place for children to live, but more needs to be done to help those with mental health problems. *The Guardian* (18 November): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/joepublic/2008/nov/18/mental-health-children>

**USA:** Children with serious mental health problems do not receive adequate care in more than one in five states, according to a survey released on Thursday. *Medical News Today* (21 November): <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/130346.php>

**USA:** The length of time convicted murderers wait for their execution is steadily rising in the U.S., raising concerns that more will suffer from the mental illness known as "death row syndrome". *Human rights Tribune* (7 November): <http://www.humanrights-geneva.info/US-Mental-health-concerns-grow-for,3689>

## **Poverty:**

**Afghanistan:** Severe drought and food shortages have caused thousands of people to leave their villages in Afghanistan's north and west to find work and aid. Many more are expected to move in desperation as winter approaches. *Relief Web* (10 November): <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/EGUA-7L9PHG?OpenDocument>

**Ethiopia:** Thousands of vulnerable civilians who left their homes in north-eastern Ethiopia in June because of drought are living in poor conditions in an urban area in Afar region, residents and local officials said. *IRIN* (2 December): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81773>

**International:** An immediate action is needed to prevent the current financial crisis from becoming a “human tragedy,” resulting in political and security challenges that would overwhelm the current economic problems, warned UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. *UN News Centre* (13 November): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28936&Cr=financial&Cr1=crisis>

**International:** The UN is asking for a record US\$7 billion for humanitarian aid to help 30 million people in Africa and the Middle East. *IRIN* (20 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81581>

### **Prisons/Policing:**

**Kenya:** Kenya's vice-president has condemned the alleged assault of prisoners by warders and ordered an investigation. *BBC* (19 November): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7737168.stm>

**Myanmar:** Democracy activists in Myanmar jailed for long terms after unfair trials should be retried in open hearings; United Nations investigators urged the ruling junta. *Reuters* (18 November): <http://in.reuters.com/article/southAsiaNews/idINIndia-36564320081118>

**Russia:** The health of a former Guantanamo detainee has declined alarmingly in a Russian detention facility, and he should be given immediate access to an independent medical examination and appropriate treatment. *Human Rights Watch* (2 December): <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/12/02/russia-ex-guantanamo-detainee-seriously-ill-jail>

**UK:** More than 1.6 million DNA and fingerprint samples of innocent people on police databases must be destroyed after a court ruled yesterday that keeping them breaches human rights. *Times Online* (5 December): <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article5289312.ece> See the full European Court of Human Rights judgement at: <http://www.bailii.org/eu/cases/ECHR/2008/1581.html>

### **Refugees and Migrants:**

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** Thousands of civilians have fled to Uganda over the past 48 hours to escape fresh fighting and brutal attacks on their villages in the Congolese province of North Kivu by armed assailants. More are on the way. *UNHCR* (27 November): <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/492eaa884.html>

**Egypt:** An international human rights lobby group has called on Egypt to stop shooting African migrants as they cross the country's border into Israel. *BBC News* (12 November): [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/7724239.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7724239.stm)

**South Africa:** Migrant women living in South Africa without legal documentation are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and are frequently blocked from accessing vital services such as healthcare. *IOL* (1 December): [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=15&art\\_id=vn20081201053156187C550072](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=15&art_id=vn20081201053156187C550072)



**Yemen:** Flash floods and surging waters killed at least 73 persons and forced an additional 20,000 to 25,000 people into displacement. *Relief Web* (10 November): <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/YSAR-7L9P3R?OpenDocument>

## **Sexual and Reproductive Rights:**

**International:** Roughly half the infants who contract HIV from their mothers die before their second birthday. These deaths can be prevented through antiretroviral prophylaxis given to a woman during pregnancy and delivery. *UNICEF* (18 November): [http://www.unicef.org/aids/index\\_46434.html](http://www.unicef.org/aids/index_46434.html)

**Philippines:** A new reproductive health bill that would promote the use of contraceptives and bring in mandatory sex education in the staunchly Catholic Philippines may fail because of opposition from church groups. *BMJ* (27 November): [http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/extract/337/nov27\\_3/a2777](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/extract/337/nov27_3/a2777)

**Uruguay:** Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez and his cabinet have 10 days to promulgate or veto a bill that would decriminalise abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, which was passed Tuesday by the Senate. *Human Rights Tribune* (12 November): <http://www.humanrights-geneva.info/In-Uruguay-Congress-votes-to,3709>

**USA:** Women have been winning U.S. asylum to avoid female genital mutilation in their homelands. But in 2007 three denials challenged that trend. One of those cases now under review could clarify their legal standing. *Women's E-News* (26 November): <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/3833>

**Zambia:** In an attempt to drastically reduce child mortality rates and boost maternal health, the Zambian government last year allocated a substantial budget to the public health sector. This move has resulted in a notable drop in child deaths, researchers say. *IPS* (15 November): <http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=44721>

## **Torture:**

**Equatorial Guinea:** Detainees kept in police custody in Equatorial Guinea are victims of systematic torture, and prisoners suffer inhuman conditions, an independent United Nations human rights expert said in a press statement today, blaming a break down in the country's judicial system. *UN News Centre* (19 November): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28998&Cr=torture&Cr1=rapporteur>

**Iraq:** Two Iraqis accused of killing British soldiers risk being tortured and executed, in violation of their human rights, if they are tried in Iraq for war crimes, the high court was told yesterday. *The Guardian* (19 November): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/19/iraq-human-rights>

**Malaysia:** A Malaysian court on Monday acquitted a prominent labour activist who was arrested 12 years ago for claiming that police tortured illegal immigrants in detention. *The Associated Press* (24 November): [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jF97\\_ahzzHW3hKJZyK64IYMolgNwD94L71200](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jF97_ahzzHW3hKJZyK64IYMolgNwD94L71200)

**Mauritania:** Mauritania freely uses torture as a method of investigation and repression and it has become more prevalent after a recent coup, Amnesty International has revealed. *AFP* (3

December):

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hYypK2Zhc5P65agt4sC2vokdctPA>

**USA:** Barrack Obama should act from the moment of his inauguration to restore a U.S. image battered by allegations of torturing terrorism suspects, said a group of retired military leaders planning to press their case with the president-elect's transition team. *Reuters* (2 December): <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSTRE4B18UY20081203>

## **Violence against Women:**

**Africa:** Continued violence against women is one of the focuses of a continental meeting reviewing progress made towards achieving gender equality in Africa. *IPS* (21 November): <http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=44806>

**Cambodia:** Women and girls in Cambodia are facing an increasing risk of rape and sexual assault, a government report has said. *BBC news* (25 November): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7747314.stm>

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** As efforts continue to try to end the conflict in the eastern DRC, the toll the fighting has taken on civilians grows higher. And both women and men have been victims of rape and sexual violence. *The Voice of America* (26 November): <http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2008-11-26-voa57.cfm>

**Haiti:** Human rights organisation Amnesty International is calling on the Haitian government to do more to tackle the widespread rape of girls, often by gangs of armed men. *BBC News* (27 November): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7750568.stm>

**International:** Academy Award-winning actress and activist Charlize Theron said today she was honoured to go to work for the United Nations on the Secretary-General's "UNite to End Violence against Women" campaign after being inducted as a UN Messenger of Peace. *UN News Centre* (17 November): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28969&Cr=violence+against+women&Cr1=>

**Ivory Coast:** As Côte d'Ivoire focuses on restoring stability and holding presidential elections, women's organisations say stopping violence against women and girls must be an urgent priority. *IRIN* (10 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81380>

**Nepal:** Despite campaigns against gender-based violence over several decades, beating, slapping, kicking, hair-pulling, verbal abuse, as well as the use of sticks, knives and acid remain common forms of domestic violence in Nepal. *IRIN* (25 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81652>

**Papua New Guinea:** Gang rape, payback rape, tribal war rape, torture and murder of women suspected of sorcery are common in Papua New Guinea, an Australian study has found. *The Australian* (26 November): <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24710907-12377,00.html>

**Philippines:** According to a report by the Philippine National Police (PNP) Women and Children Protection Centre, in 2007, the number of cases of violence against women had risen by 17 percent from 2006. *IRIN* (26 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81668>

**Sudan:** Southern women played a significant role in the war, fighting and supporting the multiple armed groups, experts say, adding that they also suffered routine sexual violence. *The Sydney*

*Morning Herald* (26 November): <http://news.smh.com.au/world/south-sudans-women-warriors-struggle-in-peace-20081126-6ho6.html>

**Sudan:** Women marched through the Southern Sudanese town of Bor recently to highlight an important message: "Treat women with respect". "Bring an end to violence against women, and let women contribute to develop the nation," said some 100 women parading through the capital.

*IRIN* (17 November): <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81494>

## **Conferences/Seminars/Courses:**

### **International Conference on Gender-based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health**

15-18 February 2009, Mumbai, India. For more information please see:

<http://www.nirrh.res.in/announcements/GenderbasedViolence.pdf>

### **Course: Health in the Americas**

Tampa Florida, USA - May 11 - May 29, 2009. The course "Health in the Americas" is a joint project between the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office of the World Health Organization, and the Department of Global Health of the College of Public Health at the University of South Florida (USF). More information can be found at:

<http://www.paho.org/English/ad/dpc/HIAcourseinfoFINAL.pdf>

### **FIGO World Congress 2009**

The XIX FIGO World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics will take place in Cape Town, South Africa from 4-9 October 2009. Further details of the event will be posted on the following website:

<http://www.fig02009.org.za/>

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