
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

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These and other links to news and reports can be found at:
<http://web.amnesty.org/news/engindex>

Death penalty

India. President APJ Kalam has turned down a plea for clemency for a convicted rapist and murderer facing execution in Calcutta. BBC 4 Aug

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3533810.stm

Indonesia. Despite pleas for clemency by the Indian government, the European Union and human rights groups, Indonesia carried out the execution of Indian national, Ayodhya Prasad Chaubey, on 5 August - the country's first execution in three years. VOA News 05 Aug,

<http://www.voanews.com/article.cfm?objectID=A50F23B0-6D75-4762-A0050DCB18C8F308>

Iraq. The Danish military, which operates under British control in Iraq, has suspended its handover of prisoners to British forces because of the reinstatement of capital punishment, saying they want assurances that no-one they hand over will face the death penalty. Britain maintains that European conventions against capital punishment do not apply in Iraq. Scotsman.com 11 Aug, <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=3325785>

Libya/Bulgaria. The case of the six foreign health professionals under sentence of death in Libya is discussed in this "personal view" from the BMJ (14 August):

<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/329/7462/409>

Texas. The District Attorney of Jefferson County, Tom Maness, has said he believes that the time-consuming and costly nature of capital punishment may lead to its demise. Maness was speaking following a ruling by a District Court judge, which recommended that the death sentence of Walter Bell, who is mentally retarded, be commuted to life imprisonment. Jefferson County had previously spent countless hours of work and hundreds of thousands of dollars to prosecute Bell. DPIC 30 July

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/article.php?did=1094&scid=64>

USA. James Barney Hubbard became the oldest person to be executed in the USA under present death penalty laws when he was put to death in Alabama on 5 August. Hubbard was sentenced to death for the murder of Lillian Montgomery in 1977. He had been on death row for more than a quarter of a century, and was reported to suffer from dementia which sometimes led him to forget who he was and why he was on death row. Washington Post 6 Aug <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A43630-2004Aug5.html> (registration needed).

Female genital mutilation

Iraq. Activists in Iraq are trying to end female genital mutilation, reports Women's ENews, 1 August, <http://www.womensenews.com/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1933/context/archive>

Gender

China. China is offering incentives to stop farming families aborting females to try to redress a dangerous gender imbalance in its population reports the London Times (13 August).

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,174-1213777,00.html>

HIV/AIDS

Thailand. The UN Special Rapporteur On The Right to Health, Paul Hunt, has welcomed the decision by Thailand to treat injecting drug users -- who are vulnerable to the deadly HIV virus -- as patients rather than criminals. UN News Centre, 2 August.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=11521>

UK. Doctors are concerned that the UK policy of dispersing asylum seekers may lead to increased HIV transmission. BBC 6 Aug

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3536092.stm>

<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/329/7461/322>

Human Rights

Botswana. Mr Oliphant Mfa, assistant minister for presidential affairs, announced that Botswana will not stop the practice of flogging the thousands of Zimbabweans who cross illegally into Botswana every month, fleeing their country's economic crisis. Mr Mfa was responding to criticism from a Zimbabwean minister who described the practice of flogging as "punitive". Certain crimes are punishable by corporal punishment in Botswana instead of jail terms.

BBC 10 Aug, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3552380.stm>

Canada. A task force appointed in Toronto in December 2003, set up in response to concern about the abuse of the powerful painkiller, OxyContin, has recommended that police should have the power to obtain the confidential health information of drug users suspected of illegally obtaining prescription drugs to feed their drug habit. Police have blamed the drug for a 100 per cent jump in the number of armed robberies and increasing violence in Toronto.

Toronto Star, 4 August

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1091571050880&call_pageid=968332188774&col=968350116467

Canada - taser review. Canada's police chiefs have launched a review of all information on the use of taser guns in the wake of two recent deadly incidents involving the weapons, reports the *Globe and Mail* (10 August).

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20040810.wtaser0810/BNStory/National/>

Indonesia. Following the acquittal of four high-ranking Indonesian officials who had previously been found guilty by the Human Rights Court in Jakarta of crimes against humanity in East Timor, Human Rights Watch called on the United Nations to take steps to create a judicial process to bring to justice those responsible for these crimes. The acquittal of the four means that all Indonesians indicted for crimes against humanity in East Timor have now been either acquitted or overturned and only two of the 18 who were originally tried by the court may serve prison time. Both of these men are ethnic East Timorese. Human Rights Watch, 7 Aug, <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2004/08/06/indone9205.htm>

Ivory Coast. Three mass graves containing at least 99 bodies have been found near the northern rebel-held town of Korhogo, the scene of fighting between rival rebel factions in June. BBC, 3 Aug, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3529710.stm>

Vietnam. Dr Nguyen Dan Que, a 62 year-old physician, has been sentenced to two and-a-half years' imprisonment for writing an essay about state censorship and the media. Dr Que, who had been held in incommunicado detention since his arrest in March 2003, is the third person to be convicted in Vietnam in July solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Human Rights Watch, 30 July.

<http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2004/07/30/vietna9168.htm>. See also AI's Urgent Action on his case: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA410182004>

Organ trade

Pakistan. Foreigners and wealthy Pakistanis needing organ transplants are increasingly looking to Pakistan, where people living in poverty sell their organs to pay off debts. CNN.com 4 Aug, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/08/04/pakistan.organ/>

Prisoners

Denmark. Four high-ranking officers allegedly involved in illegal interrogation methods involving Iraqi detainees have been summoned home by Defence Minister, Soren Gade. *Copenhagen Post*, 5 Aug, <http://cphpost.sites.itera.dk/get/80581.html>

Iraq. More than 100 children, are being held by coalition forces in jails such as Abu Ghraib, according to the Sunday Herald. Witnesses claim that the detainees, some of them - as young as 10 - are subjected to rape and torture. *Sunday Herald*, 1 Aug, <http://www.sundayherald.com/43796>

UK/Guantanamo. Repeated abuses allegedly suffered by three British prisoners at the hands of US interrogators and guards in the Guantánamo Bay detention camp in Cuba could amount to war crimes, according to the Red Cross. *Guardian*, 5 Aug, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/guantanamo/story/0,13743,1276441,00.html>

USA. Juvenile justice facilities across the nation are in a dangerously advanced state of disarray, with violence an almost everyday occurrence and rehabilitation the exception rather than the rule. Abuse of juvenile inmates by staff is routine and the federal government have active investigations, or are monitoring settled cases in juvenile justice systems in 13 states or separate territories. *U.S. News & World Report*, 9 Aug. <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/040809/usnews/9juvenile.htm>

Right to health

Germany. After the government introduced a user fee in January 2004 whereby patients must pay for their first doctor's appointment each quarter, visits to physicians have decreased. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 3 August, <http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/171/3/226-a>

Ghana. Dr Addo Kufuor, Minister of Defence, said it had become necessary for the country to re-think its policy on professional training in order to stop the present trend of trained health professionals leaving the country because of work-load and conditions issues. Dr Kufuor said the services of 408 doctors trained at a cost of 24.4 million dollars are likely to be lost by 2006 if the present trend continues unchecked. *allAfrica.com*, 9 Aug <http://allafrica.com/stories/200408091346.html>

Humanitarian medicine. Some ethical issues arising in humanitarian medicine are discussed in the BMJ. See: Harding-Pink D. Humanitarian medicine: up the garden path and down the slippery slope, *BMJ* 2004;329:398-399 <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/329/7462/398>; with a commentary by Forrest D, Barrett J. Ethical pitfalls can be hard to avoid. *BMJ* 2004;329:399-400, <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/329/7462/399> See also: Orach CG, De Brouwere V. Postemergency health services for refugee and host populations in Uganda, 1999-2002. *Lancet* 2004; 364: 611-12 www.thelancet.com/journal/vol364/iss9434/full/llan.364.9434.primary_research.30469.1

Israel/OT (Gaza). Vigilantes apparently affiliated with the Hamas movement violated the core principles of international humanitarian law by attacking a hospital and killing two wounded men in custody who had been accused of collaborating with Israel, Human Rights Watch said, 3 Aug, <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2004/08/03/isrlpa9181.htm>

Israel/OT. Haaretz (12 August) reports on difficulties faced by those seeking to move in or out of Gaza including those with health problems. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=464037>

Israel/OT Three Palestinian women, who were among more than 3,400 Palestinians trapped on the border at Rafah after the Israeli army closed the border in mid-July, have lost their babies through miscarriages as they waited for the Israeli army to open the frontier reports Gulf Daily News 5 Aug, http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/arc_Articles.asp?Article=88558&Sn=WORL&IssueID=27138

UK. Doctors are rebelling over plans that would lead to thousands of refugees being refused life-saving treatment for HIV on the National Health Service. Guardian, 8 Aug, http://www.guardian.co.uk/Refugees_in_Britain/Story/0,2763,1278801,00.html

WHO - polio. The World Health Organisation says it is optimistic that polio can be eradicated globally by the end of 2004. BBC, 4 Aug <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3533618.stm>

Torture

France. Two French nationals, held for more than two years of detention in the U.S. military prison at Guantánamo Bay, said drugs were used to torture prisoners. Capitol Hill Blue, 2 August, http://www.capitolhillblue.com/artman/publish/article_4954.shtml

Uganda. About 340 inmates at Nyamushekyera government prison went on hunger strike on 9 August and refused to do manual work to protest the torture of their colleague by prison warders. allAfrica com, 9Aug, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200408090551.html>

UK. In a report released on 11 August, the British parliament's joint committee on human rights found that Britain risks breaching key international obligations by persisting with the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001. epolitix, 4 Aug, <http://www.epolitix.com/EN/News/200408/240d71fc-3ee7-47f5-9021-6def1e9349c8.htm>

For a summary of report, see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200304/jtselect/jtrights/158/15803.htm>

full report available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200304/jtselect/jtrights/158/15802.htm>

UK. Appeal court judges have ruled that British courts can use evidence extracted under torture, as long as British agents were not complicit in the abuse. *Guardian* 11 Aug. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1281390,00.html

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<http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/bmj:329/7462/394> See also: Wynd S, Durrheim DN. Health-care provision and the path out of poverty. *Lancet* 2004; 36 4:

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