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# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2000**

## **Annual Report Summaries 2000**

**An overview of Amnesty International's Annual Report**

AI INDEX: POL 10/04/00

## **NOTE TO EDITORS**

The following summaries provide an overview but do not detail all the human rights abuses in the Amnesty International Report 2000. For full information, please refer to the report.

The following statistics on human rights violations and abuses in 1999 are based on information from the *Amnesty International Report 2000*. The statistics include the number of countries in which human rights abuses took place but do not detail the numbers of victims.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WORLDWIDE DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 38 countries in 1999.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 37 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 132 countries.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 61 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1999 in 51 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 63 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 31 countries. Prisoners were under sentence of death in at least 63 countries.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 46 countries.

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# AFRICA

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 2000 Covering events from January to December 1999

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Armed conflict, mass displacement of people, torture, ill-treatment and endemic impunity continued to be rife in the African region.

Abuses against civilians by rebel forces during **Sierra Leone's** internal armed conflict have been among the worst known: killings, cutting off limbs, most frequently hands and arms, rape and other forms of sexual abuse and abductions were systematic and widespread. Despite the peace agreement signed in July 1999 between the government and the armed opposition, these abuses continued.

The armed conflict continued in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** where the armed opposition was supported by **Burundi, Rwanda,** and **Uganda** and government forces by **Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe** and reportedly **Sudan. Chad** withdrew its forces in April. In the **DRC** ill-treatment and torture, including rape, were widespread and the government and its supporters continued persecuting members of the Tutsi ethnic group,

Thousands of unarmed civilians, including women and children, were killed in **Burundi, Congo** and **DRC** by both government forces and armed opposition groups.

**Burundi** plunged to the verge of a humanitarian and human rights crisis as the ongoing armed conflict escalated. Hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed, "disappearances" increased dramatically and thousands of people continued to be detained without charge or trial, many in very harsh conditions.

In **Rwanda** tens of thousands of detainees continued to be held without charge or trial for prolonged periods in inhuman conditions. Unsubstantiated accusations of participation in the genocide were frequently used as ways of settling scores or to prevent property owners from reclaiming illegally occupied property.

Opponents, or perceived opponents, to the forces in power faced arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and often unlawful killing in **DRC, Burundi** and **Congo**.

Armed opposition groups in **Burundi, Congo, DRC** and **Rwanda** were also responsible for committing human rights abuses, including: unlawful killings, torture and ill-treatment.

The **Togolese** security forces continued their tradition of violating human rights as the authorities watched passively and did nothing to bring those responsible to justice. After Amnesty International's report detailing extrajudicial executions was published the authorities took reprisals against human rights defenders suspected of passing information to the organization. Human rights defenders were also at risk in **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho** and **Liberia**.

The human rights situation deteriorated in **Zimbabwe** as politically motivated torture re-surfaced for the first time since the late 1980s, and harassment of political opponents increased. The press came under pressure as two journalists were arrested and tortured while in military detention following the publication of an article reporting an alleged military coup attempt.

Perpetrators of human rights violations continued to escape justice in Africa: the former president of **Ethiopia**, Mengistu Haile-Mariam, still had a safe haven in **Zimbabwe**. The peace agreement in **Sierra Leone** granted a total amnesty for gross human rights abuses, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. Some countries, including **Congo** and **Niger** passed laws giving amnesty to perpetrators of

human rights abuses. Other governments, such as **Burkina Faso** and **Mauritania**, continued to flout their own laws in not prosecuting those believed to have committed human rights violations.

Genocide trials continued in **Ethiopia** and **Rwanda**. In **Burundi** the trials of scores of political prisoners accused of involvement in the 1993 massacres of Tutsi civilians continued to fall short of international standards for fairness. A former Rwandese official was convicted in **Switzerland** for crimes committed during the genocide and a **Mauritanian** army officer was arrested and investigated for torture in **France**.

The situation in Nigeria continued to improve as further political prisoners were released. A judicial commission of inquiry was set up to investigate past human rights violations and a number of officials and government associates suspected of involvement in human rights violations were brought to trial. There were confirmed incidents of killings by the security forces where excessive force was used and which were not investigated by the authorities.

Thousands of children under the age of 18, often forcibly recruited, fought with rebel or government forces in **Sierra Leone, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia, Angola** and **Sudan**.

In **Somalia**, where there is no judiciary or functioning court system, scores of unarmed civilians were killed deliberately and arbitrarily by the armed militias of clan-based factions, who operate with impunity. Abductions, hostage-taking and rape were widespread.

In 1999 the peace process in **Angola** collapsed completely and a new round of large-scale human rights abuses were committed in the context of the return to full-scale armed conflict. Following attacks against UNITA, the Angolan armed opposition, from **Namibian** soil, this border area was destabilized and beatings, rapes and looting by Angolan forces were reported.

War continued to dominate **Sudan**, where people taking no part in the hostilities faced gross human rights abuses -- deliberate and arbitrary killings -- by all parties to the conflict. Government forces and their allies were reported to have committed abductions and enslavement. Oil companies played an increasing role in human rights abuses, where they often took no responsibility for human rights abuses linked to the forces they used to protect their oil fields.

Unrest continued in the region as the government of **Côte d'Ivoire** was overthrown by a coup in December. In **Ethiopia** the continuing war with Eritrea led to huge casualties and massive internal displacement.

In attempts to escape armed conflicts, people fled from **Sierra Leone, DRC, Sudan, and Congo** to neighbouring countries. Detentions and forcible deportations, often in harsh conditions, took place in **Ethiopia**. Meanwhile refugees were arrested, ill-treated or harassed in **Djibouti, Benin, South Africa, Kenya** and **Tanzania**. The governments of **Ethiopia** and **Burundi** forcibly moved hundreds of thousands of people and large internally displaced populations, including many unaccompanied children, were found in **Ethiopia, Sudan** and **Sierra Leone**. In **Senegal** human rights abuses continued to be committed both by the army and the armed opposition group which claims the independence for southern Casamance.

Amnesty International called for an end of transfers of arms, ammunition and combatants to rebel forces in **Sierra Leone** and denounced the indiscriminate killings of civilians in conflicts in **Congo, DRC, Djibouti** and **Sudan**.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN AFRICA DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 17 countries in the region in 1999.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 10 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 36 countries in the region.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 15 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1999 in 15 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial, in 24 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 5 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 17 countries.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in 18 countries.

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# AMERICAS

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 2000 Covering events from January to December 1999

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While efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of past human rights violations continued on the international scene -- most notably with the Pinochet case -- impunity remained rampant in most countries throughout the continent.

In the context of an increasingly violent armed conflict, human rights violations escalated in **Colombia**, with the civilian population suffering atrocities at the hands of the armed forces, paramilitary groups working with their support or acquiescence, and armed opposition groups. In 1999 more than 3,500 people were the target of political violence, with widespread "disappearances", kidnapping, torture, murder and mass displacement. While the Colombian population lives in terror, those responsible continue to walk free.

In **Mexico**, reports of arbitrary detentions, torture, killings and death threats continued. Victims included peasants and indigenous people, human rights defenders and political activists. During the year, significant advances were made in the investigation of the 1997 Acteal massacre but a number of judicial proceedings were still under way in connection with it. However, a largely ineffective judicial system contributed to the ongoing impunity for human rights violations.

In countries as diverse as the **USA** and **Ecuador, Jamaica** and **Brazil, El Salvador** and **Venezuela, Haiti**, and **Nicaragua**, reports of brutality or the use of disproportionate force by the police -- too often resulting in fatal incidents -- were commonplace. The rate of investigation and punishment of such practices is often far below the acceptable. Many of the victims do not even file complaints for fear of reprisals.

In the **USA** many of the unarmed suspects shot by police were members of ethnic minority groups, and consistent reports point to a pattern of abuses in which race and ethnicity play a crucial role. Despite some positive developments -- including the outlawing of "racial profiling" in some states -- more needs to be done to increase police accountability.

In many countries such as **Brazil, Colombia, Honduras** and **Mexico**, the most vulnerable sectors of society -- including indigenous people, street children and migrant workers -- are frequently the target of harassment, ill-treatment and police brutality. For these social groups the chances of seeing justice done are almost non-existent.

Impunity is also the norm for state agents, "paramilitaries" and others who threaten and harass human rights defenders (**Bolivia, Chile, Mexico**), community leaders, journalists, trade union members and land reform activists (**Brazil, Paraguay**). In **Colombia**, human rights defenders and journalists were often the target of fatal attacks.

Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees are not a thing of the past, and continue to be widely reported throughout the region, including in **Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Paraguay** and **Peru**. Most of the countries in the region are party to the International Convention against Torture, yet impunity remains rife among perpetrators.

The plight of prisoners is worsened by inhuman conditions of detention, extreme overcrowding, poor hygiene and lack of adequate medical care and basic services. Amnesty

International delegations visiting the region reported appalling prison conditions in **Brazil, Haiti and Peru**, often amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. In **Venezuela**, 400 prisoners were killed in 1999 in episodes of violence -- some of which involving prison guards -- fostered by the extremely harsh conditions.

Among the thousands of prisoners enduring dreadful conditions in **Peru's** prisons are more than 200 prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience, all falsely charged with terrorism-related offences and often convicted after blatantly unfair trials celebrated before military courts.

In **Cuba**, several hundred people remained imprisoned for political offences, 19 of whom were recognised by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience by the end of the year.

Despite some progress in the way of tackling the legacy of massive past human rights violations in countries like **Argentina, Chile and Guatemala**, most of those violations remained unpunished and the truth about them has not been uncovered.

While Augusto Pinochet spent the whole year under house arrest in the UK, legislation institutionalizing impunity remained in place in his native **Chile**, hindering attempts by victims and their relatives to obtain justice. Similar legislative obstacles also exist in **Argentina and Uruguay** and no steps have been taken to remove them.

In **Guatemala** the UN-sponsored Commission for Historical Clarification identified the armed forces as the main actor in the atrocities committed during the country's civil conflict. However, despite a few positive advances, investigations into past abuses were slow and the few individuals convicted received sentences that failed to reflect the gravity of the offence. Impunity also continues to prevail for post-conflict abuses: more than 2 years after the murder of Bishop Gerardi, the case remains unresolved.

On the international level, a number of governments across the region took steps that could seriously undermine global and regional mechanisms for human rights protection. Yet, there was little or no reaction on the part of the international community.

The **USA** continued to act in flagrant violation of international human rights standards by executing people convicted of crimes they committed under the age of 18. Foreign nationals charged with capital offences continued to be denied the right to seek consular assistance. In 1999, 98 people were executed in 20 states, bringing to 598 the total number since the resumption of executions in 1977.

Despite the global trend towards abolition of the death penalty, executions also took place in **Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago** (where executions were resumed after a 5-year *de facto* moratorium).

In **Guyana** a reservation to the (First) Optional Protocol to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights came into force in April, preventing death row inmates from petitioning the Human Rights Committee. In May, **Trinidad and Tobago** withdrew from the American Convention on Human Rights on the grounds that this would facilitate the implementation of the death penalty. In July **Peru** withdrew from the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. As a result, people in these countries were deprived of the additional human rights safeguards provided by such international instruments and bodies.



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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE AMERICAS DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 8 countries in the region in 1999.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 9 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 23 countries in the region.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 4 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1999 in 7 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial, in 8 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 3 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 10 countries.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 4 countries.

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# ASIA/PACIFIC

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 2000 Covering events from January to December 1999

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Armed and inter-ethnic conflict claimed the lives of thousands of civilians in the Asia Pacific region and facilitated other human rights abuses such as torture, "disappearances" and arbitrary detention.

Despite a well-organized campaign of intimidation by pro-Indonesian militia groups supported by the Indonesian army, **East Timor** voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia in August. Hundreds of people were killed and tens of thousands of people were forced to flee violent attacks.

Hundreds more people were killed in other parts of **Indonesia** in the context of counter-insurgency operations, communal violence and political protest. Ten elderly men who had been jailed in 1965 in connection with an alleged coup were released alongside dozens of other political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

Violent inter-ethnic conflict in **Solomon Islands** left hundreds of people dead or injured and thousands of civilians displaced. In **India**, hundreds of civilians were killed in armed conflicts in north-eastern states and Jammu and Kashmir, and hundreds were displaced.

Taliban forces in **Afghanistan** burned homes, destroyed orchards, wheat fields and irrigation systems, and forcibly displaced over 100,000 mainly Tajik people in the context of inter-ethnic fighting. Taliban courts ordered floggings, amputations and executions after unfair trials.

The death penalty was used throughout the region. The first executions in 23 years took place in the **Philippines** where six people were killed by lethal injection during the year. **Taiwan** executed at least 24 people.

Scores of people were sentenced to death in **Viet Nam**, and public executions were carried out by firing squad, although the number of capital offences was reduced by the National Assembly.

In proportion to its population, **Singapore** has possibly one of the highest rates of executions in the world, with the death penalty a mandatory punishment for drug trafficking, murder, treason and certain firearms offences.

Positively, **Nepal** abolished the death penalty for all crimes. But, the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in the context of the Maoist "people's war" raised major concerns. Forty-four people were reported "disappeared" after they were seen being arrested police.

Political tensions were heightened in **Malaysia** with the trials of hundreds of *reformasi* demonstrators, renewed calls for the repeal of the Internal Security Act, and the sentencing of former Deputy Prime Minister and prisoner of conscience Anwar Ibrahim. Malaysia's former police chief was charged with assaulting Anwar Ibrahim, but many other incidents of police brutality were not adequately investigated.

Restrictions on religious freedom continued in **Viet Nam** and **Laos**, and in **China** there was a severe crackdown as part of a two-year “anti-superstition” campaign.

1999 saw the most serious and wide-ranging crackdown on peaceful dissent in **China** for a decade. Thousands of people were arbitrarily detained by police and some were sentenced to long prison terms after unfair trials or sent to forced labour camps. Systemic torture and ill-treatment continued. AI recorded around 18,000 executions in China in the 1990s, a figure which it believes to be far below the real number.

In **Japan**, five people were executed and many prisoners continued to be held under the death sentence in solitary confinement. The use of solitary confinement was also excessive in **South Korea**. In **North Korea**, the “famine in slow motion” resulted in hundreds of people crossing into China in search of food who were sometimes shot at by North Korean security forces.

The human rights situation in **Myanmar** remained poor. More than 200 people were sentenced to long prison terms, in addition to 1200 existing political prisoners. The military was involved in the forced relocation, forced portering and killing of ethnic minority civilians. However, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced in May that it had begun to visit detainees in places of detention.

In **Cambodia**, negotiations continued between the government and the United Nations over how to bring to trial those responsible for gross human rights violations during the “Khmer Rouge” period (1975 - 1979). No independent monitors were allowed access to two “Khmer Rouge” suspects who were arrested during 1999.

Women were particularly vulnerable in South Asia where governments failed to protect them and investigate serious human rights abuses such as acid attacks and “honour killings”.

In **Pakistan**, the government continued to demonstrate a bias against women by failing to investigate serious human rights abuses, including the “honour killings” of several hundred girls and women and the trafficking of women.

Similarly in **Bangladesh**, the government failed to protect women from acid attacks and dowry-related murders or investigate rape in custody by police. In one case, the police in Rajshahi were said to have demanded a large bribe before taking action to investigate the reported gang rape of a 12-year-old girl.

Attacks on socially and economically weaker sections of society in **India**, dalits and tribal people, were commonplace and often with the apparent connivance of the police and local authorities. Access to justice remained problematic and women were particularly vulnerable to abuse. Those who sought justice on their behalf became victims themselves.

The government in **Sri Lanka** took some steps to address past human rights violations by the security forces, including exhuming the remains of 15 people who were reported to have “disappeared” in mid-1996. But impunity in relation to torture remained a serious concern. Deliberate killings of members of parliament and local councillors belonging to Tamil political parties represented in parliament by the LTTE became more pronounced.

**New Zealand** introduced new legislation to detain asylum-seekers who arrive without documentation, and over 4000 refugee applicants and ‘boat people’ were without judicial control in **Australia** in contravention of international law.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ASIA/PACIFIC DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 7 countries in the region in 1999.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 5 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 23 countries in the region.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 12 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1999 in 9 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 11 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 10 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 15 countries.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 9 countries.

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# EUROPE

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 2000 Covering events from January to December 1999

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As war spawned human rights atrocities in Chechnya and the international community struggled to establish lasting peace in Kosovo, in the rest of Europe, torture and ill-treatment by police -- often racially motivated -- continued to be the most widely reported human rights abuse.

The Russian military offensive in **Chechnya** and the intensified campaign of intimidation against Chechens in Moscow and elsewhere displayed a blatant disregard for international human rights and international humanitarian law. Atrocities were committed by both Russian soldiers and Chechen fighters. Russian soldiers allegedly tortured, raped and killed non-combatants, and detainees in "filtration camps" suffered horrific and routine abuse. Chechen fighters were alleged to have used civilians as "human-shields". In the face of international protests Russia adamantly refused the entry of independent observers to the region and would not permit an international investigation.

The scale of abuses against the ethnic Albanian population in **Kosovo** peaked during the NATO air strikes, and included unlawful killings, "disappearances", arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment. With the withdrawal of Serbian and Yugoslav forces from the province, Serbs, Roma and other ethnic minorities suffered human rights abuses in their turn. Despite the presence of a large peace-keeping force and a UN-led administration these abuses continued, partly due to insufficient resources and a failure to establish the rule of law.

Refugees and asylum seekers continued to suffer human rights violations. Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo who sought asylum in **Macedonia** often found the border closed in contravention of international refugee law. New amendments to asylum law in **Hungary** -- brought in to provide greater protection to applicants -- were circumvented by officials.

In **England** and **Ireland** the overall impact of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act and the 1999 Immigration Bill proved detrimental to refugees. The main party of the far right in Austria openly advocated a halt in immigration, alleging abuses of the asylum system.

Cruel and dangerous methods of restraint, including the deliberate blocking of breathing passages, were the subject of investigation in **Switzerland** and **Belgium** following deaths by asphyxiation during forcible deportation. In **Hungary**, asylum-seekers, including children, were held and sometimes ill-treated in detention centres, despite government statements to the contrary.

Reports of police abuse -- frequently racially motivated -- continued, with the perpetrators walking free. Intimidation and excessive force were frequently used by police in **Bulgaria** and torture in detention was linked to an alleged police protection racket in **Moldova**. In July, the European Court of Human Rights found **France** guilty of violating international standards on torture and fair trial. The **United Kingdom** received strong criticism from the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (ECPT) for its system of dealing with police ill-treatment.

Roma fell prey to prejudice yet again with reports ranging from verbal abuse and threats, to indiscriminate beatings and death. Particular problems were identified in **Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Greece**, **Hungary**, **Romania**, **Slovakia** and **Kosovo**, with assaults often taking place against a background of vilification of Roma by sections of the media and public.

The number of reports of torture in **Turkey** exceeded those of the previous two years and several people reportedly died as a result of torture. The sentencing to death of Abdullah Öcalan raised fears that **Turkey** might resume executions after a 15-year moratorium. Turkey's acceptance as a

candidate for European Union membership, conditional on human rights guarantees, brought hopes of reform.

There were further sectarian killings in **Northern Ireland** during negotiations over the implementation of the Multi Party Agreement. In March a Human Rights Commission was formed and began consultation over a bill of rights.

In June, Amnesty International urged the government of **Spain** to immediately revoke the laws under which terrorism suspects are detained. The Basque armed separatist group ETA announced that it was ending its indefinite cease-fire in November.

Prison conditions in **Belarus, Italy, Russia** and **Portugal** still fell below international minimum standards, often amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and accompanied by acts of violence from prison staff and inmates.

The threat of imprisonment for conscientious objection to military service remained in several countries. In Greece the authorities were reported to have obstructed applications for conscientious objector status in some cases, leaving the applicant to be charged with insubordination and receive up to four years in prison. In **Armenia, Latvia, Belarus, Macedonia** and **Russia** there remained no civilian alternative to military service.

Amnesty international adopted as a prisoner of conscience in **Turkey** the former leader of the Human Rights Association, Akin Birdal. Six conscientious objectors in **Finland** -- who refused to carry out civilian service because of its punitive length -- were also considered prisoners of conscience. Other prisoners of conscience remained imprisoned in **Belarus, Turkey** and **Russia**.

Throughout Europe the worldwide trend to abolish the death penalty continued, with **Turkmenistan** and **Lithuania** commuting all their death sentences to life imprisonment. In a positive step, President Yeltsin of **Russia** commuted more than 700 death sentences. The ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights -- a treaty providing for the total abolition of the death penalty-- by **Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Slovakia, Turkmenistan** and the **UK** was a welcome development.

Unfortunately, **Armenia** failed to approve the necessary domestic legislation for abolition. In **Belarus, Tajikistan, the Ukraine** and **Uzbekistan** executions continued.

The number of unresolved "disappearances" continued to be a major concern, particularly in **Bosnia-Herzegovina** and **Kosovo** where tens of thousands of people remain unaccounted for. There were also disturbing reports of the possible "disappearance" of political opponents in **Turkey** and **Belarus**.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EUROPE DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 2 countries in the region in 1999.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 5 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 32 countries in the region.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 15 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1999 in 6 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 8 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 4 countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 8 countries

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 8 countries.

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# MIDDLE EAST

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## Highlights of Amnesty International Report 2000 Covering events from January to December 1999

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During 1999 widespread and serious human rights violations - including large-scale executions, routine use of torture and unfair trials, often before special courts, took place throughout much of the Middle East and North Africa. In common with the previous year, the climate of impunity remained, with few steps taken to bring to justice those responsible for past human rights violations.

Torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment continued in **Saudi Arabia**. Amnesty International recorded 103 executions in 1999, though the actual total may well have been higher. Criminal judicial procedures fell far short of international standards, with detainees denied the right of access to a lawyer, the right to defence and the right to appeal. Safeguards against the use of confessions gained under torture were lacking. Political and religious freedom continued to be severely curtailed in Saudi Arabia, and a number of people were arrested during the year on political or religious grounds. Some were held without charge or trial and without access to their families or lawyers for prolonged periods.

In **Israel** most members of the security forces enjoyed impunity for human rights violations. Torture continued to be officially permitted and systematically used until September when the High Court of Justice ruled that such methods of interrogation were unlawful. However, reports of Palestinians being beaten and otherwise ill-treated at checkpoints continued to be received. Eight Palestinian civilians were extrajudicially killed or killed from excessive use of force. About 1,500 Palestinians and 29 Lebanese, including 16 held as hostages, continued to be detained. In Israeli-occupied South Lebanon, more than 150 Lebanese were held without charge or trial in Khiam Detention Centre.

In **Iran** hundreds of people were held, some without charge or trial, following student demonstrations in July against growing restrictions on freedom of expression and closure of a daily newspaper. Many critics, journalists and students were tried and sentenced, often after unfair trials before special courts. In 1999 the death penalty continued to be routinely used and Amnesty International recorded 165 executions, although the true number may have been higher.

In **Iraq**, hundreds of people, including possible prisoners of conscience were executed. Arbitrary arrest, detention and torture of political opponents continued. Although the human rights situation in Iraqi Kurdistan had gradually improved since the cease-fire declared in 1997, cases of human rights abuses, such as arbitrary arrest and political killings, continued to occur.

The number of killings was much lower than in previous years in **Algeria**, but remained high nonetheless. "Disappearances" and torture also diminished significantly but cases continued to be reported and no concrete measures were taken by the authorities to clarify the cases of some 4,000 people who "disappeared" in previous years. Impunity, hitherto widely enjoyed by the army, security forces and paramilitary militias appeared to be increasingly granted to members of armed groups who surrendered and "repented" under the terms of both the secret agreement concluded between the army and some armed groups as well as the new Law on Civil Harmony.

In **Egypt** hundreds of suspected supporters of Islamist groups were released, but thousands of others, including possible prisoners of conscience, remained behind bars. Torture and ill-treatment of



detainees remained systematic and caused, or contributed, to several cases of death in custody. More than one hundred people were sentenced to death. Civil society institution, including human rights organizations, sharply criticized a new law regulating NGOs which imposed restrictive conditions on their activities.

In **Jordan** and **Lebanon** scores of people were arrested for political reasons including during demonstrations. Cases of torture and ill-treatment were reported from both countries. Jordan carried out 12 death sentences, forcibly exiled four Hamas leaders and forcibly returned asylum-seekers to countries where they were at risk of serious human rights violations. In **Lebanon** former members of Israel's proxy militia were given summary trials before military courts, most were sentenced to up to six months' imprisonment.

More than 350 people were arrested during 1999 for political reasons in the areas under the control of the **Palestinian Authority**, including suspected members of Islamist opposition groups and alleged "collaborators" with Israel. Orders by the High Court of Justice were systematically ignored.

In **Tunisia**, although hundreds of political prisoners were freed in November, up to 1000 continued to be detained. Former political prisoners were under strict surveillance. Human rights defenders and their families were increasingly targeted. The country witnessed further restriction on freedom of association and expression, including access to human rights organizations' websites from Tunisia being blocked. A new law which criminalized torture was passed, however, the definition of torture in the law is not as defined by the UN Convention against Torture. Torture and ill-treatment were reported to be used by security forces in Tunisia.

Hundreds of political prisoners remained in detention in **Libya**, many of them had been detained for more than a decade without charge or trial. The use of torture against political prisoners continued to be reported. Political detainees were often held in inhuman or degrading prison conditions that resulted in deaths in custody. In **Syria** hundreds of prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners remained behind bars. Cases of death in custody, inhuman prison conditions and application of the death penalty were reported during 1999.

In **Morocco**, an arbitration body on compensation for the victims of "disappearance" and arbitrary detention was established and thousands of people submitted their claims. However, the authorities failed to clarify the fate of some hundreds of "disappeared", most of them Sahrawis. Freedom of expression, association and movement continued to be restricted in the camps controlled by the **Polisario Front** near Tindouf in southwestern Algeria.

In **Kuwait**, dozens of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, continued to be held in prison following their conviction in unfair trials since 1991. Despite the government's positive steps towards reform, it failed to address past violations including extrajudicial executions and unfair trials by the Martial law and State Security Courts.

In **Bahrain** many political prisoners were released but several hundred others arrested in previous years continued to be held without charge or trial. The authorities continued to ban several Bahraini nationals from returning to the country. In the **United Arab Emirates** at least eight people were sentenced to death during 1999, seven of whom were foreign nationals. Six of the eight were reportedly sentenced to death on drug-related charges. In **Qatar** the government failed to clarify the legal status of Abd al-Rahman bin Amir al-Naimi detained since June 1998, apparently on political grounds.

In **Yemen** a number of prisoners of conscience, mainly journalists, were arrested and detained for short periods during 1999. Torture continued to be reported. The death penalty continued to be imposed and the judicial punishment of flogging, amounting to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment was a regular occurrence.

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## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2000**

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### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 4 countries in the region in 1999.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 8 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 18 countries in the region.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 15 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1999 in 14 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 12 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

- Executions were carried out in 9 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 13 countries.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 7 countries.