

PUBLIC STATEMENT

ARMENIA

Amnesty International Urges the Armenian Government to Implement Recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee

Amnesty International is today calling on the Armenian Government to implement promptly the recommendations of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee, which has issued its concluding observations on the initial report submitted by Armenia.

Amnesty International had submitted its own report to the members of the Committee detailing its concerns. These included, among other things, the imprisonment of conscientious objectors who havenot been offered any civilian alternative to compulsory military service; the alleged arbitrary detention of family members to force young men to report for conscription; continuing allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention and in the army; and the criminalization of consensual homosexual relations between adult males.

While welcoming Armenia's willingness to acknowledge problems during this transitional phase in the country's history, Amnesty International strongly urges the government to implement fully and promptly the Committee's recommendations thereby improving its human rights record.

The Human Rights Committee commended Armenia for its current progress in bringing its legislation in line with its international obligations, and welcomed a proposal to establish the Office of Ombudsperson as well as Armenia's expressed intention to abolish the death penalty by 1 January 1999.

Among other things, however, the Committee expressed concern about allegations of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials; about the poor conditions in prisons; and about discrimination against women in public and private employment and their under-representation in the conduct of public affairs.

The Committee also expressed its regret at the lack of legal provision for an alternative service to compulsory military conscription for conscientious objectors, deploring the fact that they have been conscripted by force and that there have been instances of reprisal against their family members.

The Committee noted also that the independence of the judiciary was not fully guaranteed, and that several provisions of the Armenian Constitution were not compatible

with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Recommendations by the Human Rights Committee include the establishment of a special independent body to investigate complaints of torture and ill-treatment by law-enforcement personnel; the implementation of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; the commutation of the death sentences of all persons currently on death row; and the adoption of specific preventive and punitive measures with respect to all forms of violence against women, including rape.

The Committee also recommended human rights training for the legal profession and the judiciary, and urged Armenia to disseminate widely its initial report and the Committee's concluding observations.

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For further information on Amnesty International's concerns please see the documents *Armenia: Comments on the Initial Report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee*, AI Index: 54/05/98, September 1998, and *Armenia: Summary of Amnesty International's concerns*, AI Index: 54/01/98, January 1998.