

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 104/93 Death Penalty

7 April 1993

SYRIA: Proposed expansion of scope of the death penalty

Amnesty International is concerned that at the beginning of April 1993, the Syrian National Assembly (Parliament) approved a new legal bill dealing with drug offences which included the death penalty for farmers, dealers and manufacturers of drugs. The bill will come into force as soon as it is signed by President Hafez al-Assad. Syria's current law dealing with drugs, Law 182 of 1960, does not include the death penalty.

Amnesty International, which opposes the death penalty in all circumstances, is concerned that the new legislation will lead to more loss of life. In addition, the organization believes that the inclusion of the death penalty in this new law is contrary to international standards which are developing progressively towards the abolition of such cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

The United Nations Resolution No. 32/61 of December 8, 1977 has firmly committed the international community to work towards the abolition of the death penalty by stating:

"...the main objective to be pursued in the field of capital punishment is that of progressively restricting the number of offences for which the death penalty may be imposed with a view to the desirability of abolishing this punishment..."

Despite extensive research, the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments. Moreover the use of the death penalty is irreversible and can result in the execution of innocent prisoners.

Amnesty International is calling on President Hafez al-Assad not to sign the death penalty clause included in the new legal bill.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the proposed expansion of the death penalty to drug offences and urging President Hafez al-Assad not to sign the clause containing this punishment;
- stating that Amnesty International opposes the death penalty, considering it to be a violation of the right to life and the most serious example of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment by the State;
- stating that the death penalty brutalises all who are involved in the process.

APPEALS TO

1) His Excellency **Salutation: Your Excellency**
President Hafez al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 419160 munjed sy

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2) His Excellency **Salutation: Your Excellency**
Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

His Excellency `Abdallah Tulba
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

and to Syrian diplomatic representatives accredited to your. country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 May 1993.