
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 86/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: External - USA, Jamaica. Plus Good News story from Central African Republic.

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TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Laos - 9 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 84

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FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Saudi Arabia - 14 September (international)

Togo - 22 September (targeted)

North Korea - 23 September (targeted)

Sudan - 29 September (international)

Myanmar - 6 October (international)

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October (international)

Venezuela - 10 November (international, linked to EJEs & Disappearances)

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USA: EXECUTIONS EVER INCREASING

The United States of America (USA) is continuing to execute people at an accelerating rate, with 12 men due to be executed within the next four weeks in various states, said Amnesty International today.

"In 1992 there were a record 31 executions carried out in the USA and 1993 is heading for an increase on that figure," said the human rights organization. Twenty men have been killed already this year in nine states, by various execution methods from hanging in Washington to lethal injection in Texas.

Between now and the end of August 12 prisoners have been scheduled to be killed by the state. Texas will execute by lethal injection nine of the 376 prisoners on its death row (as of April) - the largest in the USA. Two of those to be executed are juvenile offenders: Gary Graham (17 August) and Ruben Cantu (24 August).

Another juvenile, Frederick Lashley, will be executed in Missouri on 28 July unless the Governor grants him clemency. California prepares to use its gas chamber, on 24 August, for the second time since executions resumed in the state in 1992. Virginia, which so far has executed 20 people since 1982, will carry out another electrocution on 26 August.

Amnesty International is calling on the relevant authorities in these states to grant clemency to all the prisoners concerned. The organization is concerned that US Supreme Court decisions have progressively narrowed the possibilities of appeal to prisoners under sentence of death. Furthermore, the execution of juvenile offenders breaches international standards.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases believing it to be the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

AI INDEX: AMR 38/WU 04/93 EXTERNAL FOR RESPONSE ONLY
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JAMAICA: HEARING OF DEATH ROW INMATES FINISHES BUT DECISION PENDING

The hearing on the cases of Earl Pratt and Ivan Morgan (two prisoners under sentence of death in Jamaica) before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, Jamaica's final court of appeal, ended on 14 July; it had started on 28 June and lasted much longer than expected.

As is customary, the decision will be delivered at a later date. In this case it may take longer for the decision to be issued as the Committee goes on recess from the end of July until early October.

Amnesty International sent a representative to observe throughout the hearing.

For further information see News Service item: Amnesty International sends observer to London Hearing of Jamaica death sentence cases, AI Index: AMR 38/WU 03/93, News Service 71/93.

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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: LETTER FROM RELEASED PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

In June 1992, Bachir Walidou, a member of the Association pour la démocratie et le développement, Association for Democracy and Development, was arrested for writing an open letter critical of President André Kolingba. He was tried in July, found guilty of insulting the Head of State, and sentenced to eight months' imprisonment. He was released on 1 December following a presidential amnesty.

Amnesty International adopted Bachir Walidou as a prisoner of conscience and campaigned for his release. Following is an extract from a letter he sent to Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London, dated 15 June 1993:

"Il y a quelque 6 mois et demi, le 5 décembre 1992, je vous ai écrit via votre bureau de Paris, pour vous signaler ma libération intervenue 3 jours plus tôt, et vous dire merci pour le rôle déterminant que vous avez joué dans mon élargissement.

"Aujourd'hui, je vous écrit de nouveau. Pour vous dire encore ma gratitude et vous réitérer les reconnaissances de mes proches et amis.

"Merci infiniment. Merci pour vos milliers et milliers de membres qui m'ont écrit des USA, du Canada, du Japon... Merci. Bachir

English translation:

"Some 6 and a half months ago, 5 December 1992, I wrote to you via your office in Paris to inform you of my release, which had occurred three days earlier, and to say thank you for the decisive role you played in my liberation."

"Today I am writing to you once more. To speak to you again of my gratitude and to reiterate the grateful thanks of my family and friends.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for the thousands and thousands of members who wrote to me from the USA, Canada, Japan...
Thank you, Bachir."