



would drop murder charges against Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt because "it would be virtually impossible to retry the case". The statement followed a ruling by a California state appeals court that a lower court judge had acted correctly when he ordered Pratt released on bail in 1997 because he had not received a fair trial. Pratt, a former leader of the African-American Black Panther party, had spent 27 years behind bars following a conviction in 1972 on murder charges before being released from prison in June 1997 because it turned out prosecutors had suppressed evidence during the trial. [Reuters 17 February 1999]. See <http://www.cnn.com/US/9902/17/pratt/>  
For the Amnesty International news service issued in June 1997 [AI Index: AMR 51/30/97, see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1997/25103097.htm>

-----SENTENCE IN FRENCH FGM TRIAL

The woman of Malian origin who stood trial for circumcising 48 young girls in France [see AI Bulletin no. 3, 5 February 1999] has been sentenced to 8 years in jail. 26 parents who were tried as accomplices were also handed down sentences ranging from three years suspended to two years in prison. [Reuters, 16 February 1999]  
See: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid\\_281000/281026.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_281000/281026.stm)

-----CHINA FREES DISSIDENT JOURNALIST

Gao Yu, a dissident Chinese journalist sentenced to six years' imprisonment by the Beijing Intermediate People's Court on charges of "disclosing important state secrets" in November 1994, was released on medical parole by the Chinese authorities on 15 February 1999. Gao Yu reportedly suffered from angina pectoris and Meniere's disease while in detention, and according to her son will now seek medical treatment for heart and kidney problems. Amnesty International had been campaigning for the unconditional release of Gao Yu as a prisoner of conscience. See <http://search.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPlate/1999-02/16/038I-021699-idx.html>

-----HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR SUES GERMAN PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

A suit filed by a Romanian-born Holocaust survivor in the United States on 17 February 1999 claims the German pharmaceutical company Bayer AG conspired with the Nazis to buy concentration camp prisoners and conduct human experiments on them for profit, and monitored and supervised medical experiments at Auschwitz. The company, which is one of 12 German corporations that earlier this week agreed to set up a fund to compensate slave labourers and other Nazi-era victims to avoid US lawsuits, said it was "very surprised" by the charges. [Reuters 18 February 1999].  
See <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9902/18/PM-Bayer-Holocaust.ap/index.html>

-----TRIAL IN YEMEN CONTINUES

A Yemeni state doctor on 16 February 1999 in court denied allegations that several British suspects on trial for plotting bomb attacks in Yemen had been tortured, saying he could not find any trace of "recent injuries" that could have been caused by torture when he examined the defendants. Fuad Mohammad al-Qaheri said the men had not complained about having been tortured and that bruises on their wrists were caused by their handcuffs. Chris Milroy, a British Home Office pathologist and senior lecturer in forensic pathology at Sheffield University, had last month called the torture allegations 'at face value ... very persuasive' [see AI Bulletin no. 3, 5 February 1999]. [AFP/Reuters, 15/16 February 1999].  
See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle\\_east/newsid\\_280000/280556.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_280000/280556.stm)

-----REPORT ON DEATHS IN CUSTODY IN THE UK

A report by the UK Police Complaints Authority [PCA] called for urgent action to reduce the number of people dying in police custody in Britain, and warned that police chiefs could be prosecuted under new human rights legislation for failing to prevent such deaths. The report says police cells were often unsuitable for example for mentally unstable detainees, calls for better police-training in

self-defence to reduce the use of mechanical restraints, and urges specialist care for suicidal prisoners. See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk/newsid\\_282000/282272.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk/newsid_282000/282272.stm) and <http://www.independent.co.uk.stories/A1902928.html>

-----TURKEY ACCUSED OF ELECTRIC SHOCK TORTURE

A report that is to be published next month by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture [based in London] accuses the Turkish government of systematically subjecting Kurdish detainees in Turkish prisons to electric shock treatments and other sophisticated torture methods. The report, based on a study of 76 Turkish patients of Kurdish origin who were examined at the Foundation between January 1997 and March 1998, claims both male and female detainees in Turkey are often being suspended naked from the ceiling, hosed with cold water, beaten on the soles of their feet, and administered with electric shocks. [AFP 19 February 1999]. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/stories/B1902907.html>

-----SRI LANKA: EXHUMATION OF MASS GRAVE

A local magistrate in Sri Lanka has ordered the exhumation of an alleged mass grave near Chemmani village on the northern Jaffna peninsula, said to contain the bodies of some 300 Tamils who disappeared after arrest by the Sri Lankan army, to be carried out on 5 March. Amnesty International has been invited to send an independent forensic expert to observe the exhumation. See <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9902/10/BC-SRILANKA-RIGHTS.reut/index.html> For Amnesty International's latest news service on Sri Lanka, see <http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/33700599.htm>

-----GEN (Rtd) PINOCHET IN LONDON

No decision has yet been announced by the UK House of Lords following the second hearing of Augusto Pinochet's case. The UK Foreign Office on 18 February 1999 said the Vatican had made representations to Britain about the arrest of the 83-year-old who faces extradition to Spain on charges of human rights abuse. Holy See Press Office Director Joaquin Navarro-Valls said "The Apostolic See's interest ha[d] its origin in the request of the Chilean government, which is made up of a Christian-Democrat and Socialist coalition and which claims its territorial sovereignty in the various international forums, also in the judicial field." [Vatican Information Service, 19 February 1999]. See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/newsid\\_282000/282225.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/newsid_282000/282225.stm)

-----CONDITIONS OF DETENTION IN THE US

According to a US forensic psychiatrist, Terry Kupers, conditions in maximum-security housing units [SHU] in the USA are so inhumane that prisoners often become psychotic. Kupers said mentally ill prisoners are disproportionately sent to the SHU - where they are held in extreme isolation - because they have trouble coping with prison conditions and thus are more likely to break the rules. See <http://www.psych.org/pnews/99-02-05/prison.html>

In an article in the US paper "Christian Science Monitor" on 18 February 1999, correctional officers claimed that overcrowding in jails and prisons across the United States has contributed to a rise in guard violence. A spokesman of the International Association of Correctional Officers said that, however, increased training and use of monitoring technology have reduced incidents of abuse. Video cameras have been introduced in prisons and jails throughout the country. Prisoner advocates said they applauded the increase in electronic monitoring, but that its benefits were counterbalanced by a reduction in judicial oversight of prisons.

The Christian Science Monitor is available on the internet at <http://www.csmonitor.com/>

For the chapter on human rights violations in US prisons and jails in Amnesty International's recent report on USA [Rights For All, AI Index: AMR 51/35/98, October 1998], see <http://www.rightsforall-usa.org/info/report/r04.htm#>

-----BMA AWARD FOR DR BERNARD MANDELL

On 8 July 1998, the British Medical Association awarded its highest honour, the Gold Medal for Distinguished Merit, to Dr Bernard Mandell for his "distinguished contribution to the understanding of the relationship between medicine and human rights in the national and international spheres". Dr Mandell was Chairman of the Medical Association of South Africa's (MASA) Federal Council and Board of Trustees from 1987-1998 and, prior to that, a member of the Federal Council, the highest decision making body of MASA, from 1975. The decision to award him this honour has met with some severe criticism. See <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/318/7180/396>

-----DISCUSSION LIST ON TUBERCULOSIS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A new email discussion list has been set up and will run until mid-March 1999 in parallel with the tb.net conference on Human Rights and Tuberculosis to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal from 24-26 February 1999. The purpose of 'tb-rights' is to discuss matters relating to TB and Human Rights. Topics to be discussed at the conference in Nepal include TB and refugees, TB and prisoners, and compulsive HIV testing for TB patients. To join the list, <mailto:majordomo@mos.com.np> with the following text in the body of the message: subscribe tb-rights. For more information contact Ian Smith from the tb.net steering group: <mailto:iansmith@mos.com.np>

-----REPORT ON FORENSIC MISSION TO SOMALIA

A report on a mission to conduct on-site assessments of alleged mass graves in the vicinity of Hargeisa, Somalia, which has been submitted to the 55th session of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights [to take place from 15 March to 23 April 1999] is available at the UN web site <http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/TestFrame/9b03c11cf38efe438025670d003e29b1?Opendocument>  
The mission was carried out by Physicians for Human Rights in December 1997.

-----MSF NOMINATED FOR NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 1999

The French organization Medecins Sans Frontieres is one of several organizations who have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 1999. The name of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate will be published in mid-October and the prize ceremony take place on December 10 in Oslo, Norway [AFP, 15 February 1999].

-----JOB VACANCY

The International Council of Nurses [ICN] is seeking an editor for the International Nursing Review. Applications close 1 March 1999 and should be sent to Linda Carrier-Walker, Director of Communications, <mailto:carrwalk@uni2a.unige.ch> [Tel: + 41 22 908-0100 ].  
For details see: <http://www.icn.ch/editor.htm>

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