
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL NETWORK
Human rights information and web links for health professionals
AI Bulletin no. 25, 10 December 1999 AI Index: ACT 84/25/99

TODAY IS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: 51st ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF
THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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-----RECENT AI STATEMENTS & REPORTS

Mexico: Common graves in Ciudad Juárez -- Amnesty International called for transparency and
thoroughness in forensic investigations following the discovery of bodies in common graves in Ciudad
Juárez [AI INDEX: 41/36/99, 1 December 1999]. For the AI news release:

<http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/24103699.htm>

"Disappearances" in Mexico have been a long standing concern to Amnesty International. See "Mexico
"Disappearances" : a Black Hole in the Protection of Human Rights" [AMR 41/05/98]

<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1998/AMR/24100598.htm>

South Africa: Mengistu -- the opportunity for justice must not be lost. Amnesty International called for
an investigation into allegations of crimes against humanity by former Ethiopian leader Mengistu
Haile-Mariam [AFR 53/12/99]. For a link to the press release:

<http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/15301299.htm>

However, Mengistu Haile Mariam returned to Zimbabwe before any action was taken. See BBC
report, 9 December at: http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_555000/555304.stm

-----DEATH PENALTY NEWS

USA: Cornel Cooks was executed as scheduled in the first few minutes of 2 December 1999 in
Oklahoma State Penitentiary. He became the 90th prisoner to be executed in the USA this year, the
highest annual total since 1951. A total of 590 condemned prisoners have now been put to death
nation-wide since the USA resumed executions in 1977. The "Daily Ardmoreite" reported on 2
December:

http://www.ardmoreite.com/ns-search/stories/120299/new_cooks.shtml?NS-search-set=/3850f/aaa0br5EN50fa98&NS-doc-offset=0&

USA: Texas Inmate Is Executed Despite Overdose. David Martin Long, who had been scheduled to
die by lethal injection on 8 December, was found unconscious for a drug overdose on Monday 6
December and was transferred to hospital where he was placed in an intensive care ward. After the
Supreme Court rejected Long's final petition for a delay, Texas officials took him by helicopter with
medical escort to the death chamber in Huntsville and executed him by lethal injection. For the full
article, see the "New York Times" on 9 December [it may require registration]:

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/politics/camp/120999wh-gop-bush.html>

See also "The Dallas Morning News" on 9 December:

<http://www.dallasnews.com/metro/1209met6long.htm>

See also Amnesty International press release on 9 December:

<http://www.amnesty.org/news/1999/25119999.htm>

USA: The Florida Corrections Commission is recommending that the state phase out the electric chair
in favour of lethal injection. "As long as Florida clings to an antiquated method of execution --
electrocution -- we will continue to see appeals that delay enforcement of the death penalty," Ray
Sansom, commission chairman, wrote recently to Gov. Jeb Bush and state lawmakers. The Miami
Herald reports that "Gov. Jeb Bush and state lawmakers will meet in a special session next month
and give condemned inmates a choice: death by lethal injection or the electric chair."

See: <http://www.herald.com/content/today/docs/019290.htm> [link only certain today]

USA: From Peckham to Death Row: UK citizen faces death penalty in Florida.
Krishna Maharaj, a businessman from London, has spent 13 years in prison in Florida for shooting his business partners. Last week, 293 British parliamentarians signed a petition asking that his convictions be lifted. It is to be handed to the Florida Supreme Court on 10 December.

See Independent (London), 9 December:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/People/peopleother/krishna071299.shtml>

Saudi Arabia: A Pakistani convicted of murder was beheaded in Saudi Arabia on 7 December the Interior Ministry of Saudi Arabia stated. At least 99 people have been beheaded in Saudi Arabia this year. In 1998, at least 29 people were executed, the New York Times reported (8 December):

Saudi Arabia: Cash appeal to avoid death penalty. A campaign is under way in Saudi Arabia to raise \$1.3m to save the life of a convicted murderer (this is the amount required by the family of the victim in blood money). For the full article see BBC News on 7 December:

http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_553000/553596.stm

-----ROSE BIRD DIES AT THE AGE OF 63

Former California Chief Justice, Rose Bird, died at Stanford University Hospital on 4 December 1999 after many years of battling breast cancer. According to the Los Angeles Times obituary, almost from the moment she was appointed to head the state's highest court in 1977, Bird became one of the most controversial figures in California politics, among other reasons for her practice of overturning every death sentence she reviewed. In 1986, voters removed her and two other justices by refusing to extend their terms. http://www.latimes.com/news/state/updates/lat_bird991206.htm

-----MSF WORKERS HELD IN SIERRA LEONE

A doctor and a logistician of MSF, who have been opening a health project in the district of Kailahun, have been held for 48 hours by RUF authorities controlling the region. The two volunteers, with whom there has been some contact in the last two days, are Belgian and German nationals. They report to be in good health. See MSF press release on 9 December at:

http://www.msf.org/projects/s_leone/reports/1999/12/pr-ruf.htm

-----NON LETHAL ARMS RAISE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE

"Non-lethal arms" only raise the level of violence according to Steve Wright writing (in French) in Le Monde Diplomatique (December 1999). He argues that if democratic states allow manufacturers to produce such weapons they will be exported to countries that have no compunction in escalating levels of violence.

<http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/12/WRIGHT/>

-----POLICE ACCUSED OF TORTURE IN MEXICO

The death of an alleged kidnapper after receiving 40 blows to the head, two broken ribs and a burst lung has unveiled a ``system of torture" in the Jalisco state attorney general's office, according to the State Commission for Human Rights (SCHR). The president of the SCHR, Guadalupe Morfin Otero, said that Castaneda was tortured by investigators both during and after his arrest, and that he died of injuries sustained during the torture. (New York Times, 7 December)

-----CHILD SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN?

The UN and the Taliban, who control almost 90 per cent of Afghanistan, are in dispute following a UN report alleging that the Taliban uses child soldiers under 14 years old. (Christian Science Monitor, 6 December)<http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/1999/12/06/p1s3.htm>

-----LIFE SENTENCE FOR RWANDA GENOCIDE LEADER

The international war crimes tribunal in Tanzania has convicted Georges Rutaganda, former leader of the Interahamwe militia that led the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, sentencing him to life imprisonment. Rutaganda was found guilty on one count of genocide, one count of crimes against humanity and one count of murder by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania. (BBC, 6 December)

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_552000/552441.stm

-----HEALTH CARE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS CRITICISED

United Kingdom: The BMA has criticised the government's plans to disperse asylum seekers around Britain without ensuring that local health services are equipped to meet their needs. The association says that in order to cope with the health needs of many refugees and asylum seekers a clear infrastructure needs to be in place, including interpreting facilities; local refugee community groups, etc. For the full article, visit the British Medical Journal web site at:

<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/319/7223/1505#resp2>

-----SRI LANKA: BODIES SHOW SIGNS OF TRAUMA

Sri Lankan forensic experts found fatal head and body wounds on at least eight of the 15 bodies exhumed from unmarked mass graves in northern Sri Lanka. The graves were dug up earlier this year after an army soldier and five others, sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a schoolgirl and three others, said they had helped bury the bodies of hundreds of Tamils killed in military custody. (New York Times, 8 December)

See also Tamilnet reported on 8 December: <http://www.tamilnet.com/reports/99/12/0705.html>

-----ICJ REPORTS ON JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE IN INDONESIA

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) released a report (dated 30 November) on the state of the judiciary and human rights in Indonesia. The 143-page report, "Ruler's Law", analyses constitutional arrangements and sets out the observations and conclusions of a mission to Indonesia, conducted from 20 March-3 April 1999. For the ICJ press release on the subject:

<http://www.icj.org/press/press99/english/indon.htm>

The full report can be downloaded at : <http://www.icj.org/pub/publica.htm> ; scroll down to "download" section.

-----FORCIBLE CONFINEMENT OF DISSIDENTS IN MENTAL HOSPITALS

China: China continues to confine some dissidents in mental hospitals. Wang Wanxing had been confined to a mental hospital for 7 years, after showing a protesting banner in Tienenman Square in 1992. His wife deems that a medical report on Wang Wanxing was never issued. He was released on 19 August 1999 for a three months probation period, but he was confined again to hospital on 23 November 1999, allegedly because the government learnt about his intentions of giving a press conference to reveal details on his case. According to Liu Qing, president of Human Rights in China, a group based in New York, other cases of forcible confinement are known in China. The group is asking the UN High Commission for Human Rights to nominate independent doctors to effectuate an examination on Wan Wanxing [El Pais reported on 2 December 1999 - In Spanish].

-----DR FLORA BROVINA SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS IMPRISONMENT

Dr Flora Brovina, a 50-year-old paediatrician, humanitarian worker and poet, was sentenced yesterday (9 December 1999) to 12 years imprisonment by a Serbian court for conspiring against the government to commit terrorism during the NATO bombing campaign of Yugoslavia.. See BBC news on 10 December:

<http://news2.thls.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid%5F557000/557139.stm>

and the "Boston Globe Online" also on 10 December:

http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/344/nation/Serbia_sentences_Kosovo_physician+.shtml

-----CHILD REHABILITATION IN UGANDA

Since 1994 more than 10,000 children have been kidnapped by the Sudan-based Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The girls are sold into sexual slavery in southern Sudan, the boys used for gun-running, kidnapping and combat. An article discussing the rehabilitation of freed children can be found in The Observer (London), 5 December, available at:

<http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/observer/international/story/0,3879,111031,00.html> [May require registration]

-----CPT ANNOUNCES ITS PROGRAM OF VISIT IN 2000

Within the framework of its programme of periodic visits, the European Committee for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CPT) envisages organising visits to ten countries during the year 2000. For the complete press release, visit the CPT web site:

<http://www.cpt.coe.fr/en/press/991203en.htm>

-----CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC SIGNS THE ROME STATUTE OF THE ICC

On Monday, November 29th, Central Africa Republic became the 91th State to have signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Rome Statute will enter into force with 60 ratifications. To date, five countries -- Senegal, Trinidad & Tobago, San Marino, Italy and Fiji -- have completed the ratification process and deposited the instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General.

Pay a visit to the CICC International Criminal Court web site: <http://www.igc.org/icc/> and to its Ratification Atlas page: <http://www.igc.org/icc/html/countryindex.html>

-----REPORT ON WORKSHOP: 5 YEARS AFTER BEIJING

A report on a workshop -- Beijing + 5 [i.e. Five years after the Beijing Conference on Human Rights]: Future actions and initiatives -- organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and held in Beirut, 8-10 November 1999, is available at the DAW website:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/beirutreport.htm>

-----GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS SURVEY

The second annual report of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders is now available in English and French at the web-site of the FIDH: Federation Internationale des Droits de l'Homme <http://www.fidh.imagnet.fr/lobs/rapp-a.htm> as well as at the site of OMCT: Organization mondiale contre la torture/World Organization against Torture: <http://www.omct.org/obs/99report.htm>

-----FREEDOM AWARD FOR TWO BURMESE

The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development's John Humphrey Freedom Award for 1999 is being given to Dr. Cynthia Maung, a 39-year old physician from the Karen ethnic minority in Myanmar (now in exile), and Min Ko Naing, a student leader arrested in 1989 and serving a 20 year prison sentence. The award will be presented today (Friday 10 December 1999) in absentia to the recipients at a ceremony in Montreal, Canada. For details see:

<http://www.ichrdd.ca/111/english/commdoc/humphrey99/humphrey99presentatione.html>

-----UN VOLUNTARY FUND FOR TORTURE

Guidelines for applications to the UN voluntary Fund for Torture Victims as well as an application form can be obtained from: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/9/apply.htm>. The last report of the UN Voluntary Fund is available at:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/TestFrame/7f5b18e5e5844a888025680f003f583e?Opendocument>

-----HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE MEDICAL LITERATURE

A number of papers in the most recent Lancet (dated 11 December) discuss sexual violence:

<http://www.thelancet.com/newlancet/sub/issues/vol354no9195/body.commentary2018.html>, and East Timor, Macedonia and WHO initiatives on violence against women (see:

http://www.thelancet.com/newlancet/sub/issues/vol354no9195/body.news_hhr2075.html#easttimorextr emedeprivationofhealthandhumanrights) The link to "The Lancet" may require registration.

A critical discussion of responses to the human rights crisis in Sierra Leone, written by staff of the British aid agency, MERLIN, can be found in the British Medical Journal (11 December) <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/319/7224/1569> . See also correspondence on doctors and genocide: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/319/7224/1578/a>

-----MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

The 3rd International Conference on Health and Human Rights, organized by the FXB Center, Harvard, will take place in September 2000 at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA. For preliminary information see: <http://www.hri.ca/partners/xfbcenter/conferences/index.htm>

The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration is seeking papers for the next International Research and Advisory Panel in Johannesburg, South Africa, January 2001. For details see <http://141.13.240.13/~ba6ef3/nextirap.htm> . Information about the program can be obtained from Dr Joanne van Selm <mailto:ASF@pscw.uva.nl> .

-----RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Hippocrates, By Jacques Jouanna. Translated by M.B. DeBevoise. 520 pp. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. \$49.95. ISBN 0-8018-5907-7. The study of medical history has vanished from most U.S. medical schools, but is there a case to be made for medical history at least in the self-education of students and physicians? The complete book review, by Edward Huth, M.D., can be found at The New England Journal of Medicine's web site <http://www.nejm.org/content/1999/0341/0023/1776.asp>

-----FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Female Genital Mutilation: A Human Rights Analysis. A Practical Guide to Worldwide Laws and Policies, by Nahid Toubia, Research, and Anika Rahman, ISBN 1 85649 773 9 , 192pp £14.95 \$25.00 (To be published by Zed books in January 2000). The Zed Books website is: <http://www.zedbooks.demon.co.uk/>

-----CORRECTION TO AI BULLETIN No. 24, 26 NOVEMBER 1999

USA: David Junior Brown executed by lethal injection: David Junior Brown (also known as Dawud Abdullah Mohammed), "aged 5", SHOULD HAVE READ "aged 51".

-----FINAL NEWSLETTER OF 1999

Because of the approach of the end of year break, we will be issuing our last newsletter on Tuesday 21 December. For those who may already be taking a holiday we wish you a successful end to the year. The first newsletter of 2000 will be on 14 January.

This newsletter may be freely distributed in unrevised form. For free subscription contact the AI Medical Program at Amnesty International, 1Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, UK. (<mailto:medical@amnesty.org>) / AI Web site: <http://www.amnesty.org>