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PUBLIC STATEMENT

CYPRUS

Parliament should decriminalise consensual sex between adult males in private

Amnesty International is calling on all deputies of the Cypriot House of Representative to comply with the ruling issued in 1993 by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and to support the repeal of Article 171 of the Penal Code which prohibits sex between consenting male adults in private.

In 1993 the ECHR held that this article constituted a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Cyprus is a state party. Article 8 provides that everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life. Although there has been no recent prosecution of homosexuals under Article 171 of the Penal Code in Cyprus, the ECHR took the view that there was no guarantee that action would not be taken by a future Attorney-General to enforce the law. In April 1998, the Council of Europe gave Cyprus until 29 May to comply with the decision of the ECHR and reform its legislation.

Amnesty International would regard anyone imprisoned solely for sex between consenting adults in private as a prisoner of conscience. As it currently stands, the law carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment.

ENDS.../