
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 83/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 19 JULY 1993

AI INDEX: NWS 11/83/93
DISTR: SC/PO
NO OF WORDS: 613

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: External - Taiwan

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

PLEASE NOTE: An Urgent Action on prisoners of conscience in Uzbekistan, AI Index: EUR 62/17/93, was sent out on 16 July. If possible, please use it to raise media awareness of the story.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 79

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Taiwan - 22 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 82

News Service item to go with report: Taiwan: Ill-treatment on "Death Row", AI Index: ASA 38/02/93, enclosed in this News Service, embargoed for 22 July.

Georgia - 10 August

News Service item to go with Section Level Action and document, Georgia: Alleged human rights violations during the conflict in Abkhazia, AI Index: EUR 56/07/93. Please note this document has already been sent in the weekly mailing and does not have an embargo written on it - it is embargoed for 10 August.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Saudi Arabia - 14 September

Togo - 22 September

Sudan - 29 September

Myanmar - 6 October

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October

AI INDEX: ASA 38/WU 01/93
EMBARGOED FOR 22 JULY 1993

TAIWAN: CRUEL, DEGRADING AND INHUMAN TREATMENT OF PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW

Prisoners on death row in Taiwan (the Republic of China) suffer cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, spending months in special "death row" cells, with their feet permanently shackled, said Amnesty International in a report issued today.

The report also details Amnesty International's concerns about the introduction in 1992 of lethal injections as a method of execution and the continued use of executed prisoners as a primary source of organs for transplants, which raises serious ethical questions.

"The death penalty violates the most fundamental right of all: the right to life. To further punish prisoners who are waiting to die by shackling them is a cruel outrage," said Amnesty International.

Taiwan authorities justify the use of shackles as a security measure. In fact, Amnesty International believes it is a mark of the prisoner's "death row" status, used no matter what the real risk of escape is. The weight and friction of the shackles - which consist of a chain, about 50cm long, fixed at both ends to metal cuffs around the prisoner's ankles - causes permanent discomfort and pain to the prisoners. It amounts to an additional, arbitrary and degrading treatment of those sentenced to death.

Taiwan continues to make active use of the death penalty and according to unofficial sources there were at least 78 executions in 1990, 59 in 1991 and 35 in 1992. In 1992, Taiwan adopted legislation permitting execution by lethal injection, a practice which risks involving medical personnel in executions. Lethal injections involve the radical misuse of medical skills and Amnesty International urges the Taiwan authorities not to use lethal injections and medical personnel to take no part in executions, whatever the method used.

Transplanting organs from executed prisoners also involves a close relationship between medical and execution personnel, leading to medical personnel participating in the actual execution process. For example, some medical procedures for transplants, including insertion of an endotracheal tube, actually start before the execution. Amnesty International believes this participation would be even more evident if organs were transplanted from prisoners executed by lethal injections, because these require medical preparation.

"Harvesting' organs from executed prisoners presents a moral quagmire and a real risk that the timing of executions may be influenced by the need for organs. The practice should be suspended immediately and the government should review all aspects of the procedure in the light of expert professional opinion," said the organization.

Amnesty International believes that the government in Taiwan should abolish the death penalty immediately and unconditionally and should stop carrying out any executions and commute all death sentences until this is done.

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