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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 1999

Annual Report Summaries 1999

An overview of Amnesty International's Annual Report

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NOTE TO EDITORS

The following summaries provide an overview but do not detail all the human rights abuses in the Amnesty International Report 1999. For full information, please refer to the report.

The following statistics on human rights violations and abuses in 1998 are based on information from the *Amnesty International Report 1999*. The statistics include the number of countries in which human rights abuses took place but do not detail the numbers of victims.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WORLDWIDE DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1999

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 47 countries in 1998.

“DISAPPEARANCES”

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 37 countries.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 125 countries.
- Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 51 countries.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 78 countries.

UNFAIR TRIALS

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 35 countries.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 66 countries.

DEATH PENALTY

- Executions were carried out in 36 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in at least 77 countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 37 countries.

AFRICA

Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1999 Covering events from January to December 1998

In 1998, the year of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, armed conflicts, social and political unrest continued unabated leading to further appalling human rights abuses in Africa. Those responsible for these abuses were rarely brought to justice.

On the positive aspect, the International Criminal Tribunal for **Rwanda** (ICTR) announced its first judgments in the cases of people accused of involvement in the 1994 genocide. In **Nigeria**, the new authorities released more than 140 political prisoners. In October, a law forbidding female genital mutilation was passed by the National Assembly of **Togo**. President Konaré of **Mali** stated that he was opposed to the death penalty. That statement was echoed in December, by president Muluzi of **Malawi** who reaffirmed his promise made to Amnesty International that he “will never sign the death sentence for a fellow human being”. **Zambia** and **South Africa** acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In June, **Ethiopia** acceded to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights.

In 1998, the **Great Lakes Region** continued to be the theatre of widespread human rights abuses. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC), the human rights situation further deteriorated with a new insurrection against the government forces by armed opposition groups in August. Governments actively supporting the insurgents included Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. Governments actively supporting the government troops included: Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad, and reportedly Sudan. The international community failed to end the hostilities. Thousands of people, including hundreds of civilians, were deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Hundreds of human rights defenders and suspected opponents of the government were detained. More than 100 people sentenced to death were executed, representing a sharp increase from recent years. In April, the UN Secretary-General withdrew his team investigating human rights abuses in the DRC between 1993 and 1997 because of the repeated obstructions of the investigations by the government.

In the neighbouring country of the **Republic of Congo**, government and armed opposition forces conducted a deliberate campaign of killing, wounding and abducting civilians, confirming a pattern of abuses deeply rooted in power struggles since independence. In **Rwanda**, thousands of unarmed civilians were killed by the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) and insurgent groups. There was a sharp increase of “disappearances”. Despite the continuation of negotiations to put an end to the political crisis in **Burundi**, including a cease-fire agreement signed in June, hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed by security forces and armed opposition groups. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people remained in camps where they were at risk of human rights abuses.

In **Sierra Leone**, large-scale and gross human rights abuses continued to be committed throughout the year by the rebel forces of the ousted Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the armed opposition Revolutionary United Front (RUF). After their removal from power in February, they killed and mutilated thousands of civilians, including many children. The Civil Defence Forces (CDF), loyal to President Kabbah and fighting with the West African force in Liberia (ECOMOG, have also been responsible for human rights abuses although on a significantly smaller scale. Around 570,000 civilians fled the violence during the year to neighbouring countries or became internally displaced. In September, fighting between government security forces and supporters of Roosevelt Johnson, former faction leader, in Monrovia, **Liberia**, resulted in dozens of deaths; it

appears that some of the victims may have been deliberately and arbitrarily executed. Despite calls from national and international human rights groups, no official investigation was carried out into allegations of arbitrary and deliberate executions and “disappearances”.

In **Chad** the human rights situation further deteriorated with hundreds of people arbitrarily and indiscriminately killed by the security forces. Armed opposition groups were also responsible for numerous human rights abuses. In **Equatorial Guinea**, scores of members of the Bubi ethnic group suspected of involvement in attacks on military barracks were arrested. Many prisoners of conscience and over 110 other defendants were tried in May 1998 in a five-day summary military trial that grossly fell short of international standards for a fair trial.

The territorial conflict between **Ethiopia** and **Eritrea** which started in May 1998, continued leading to human rights violations. In Ethiopia, over 50,000 people of Eritrean origin were briefly detained before being expelled to Eritrea. Another 1,200 were interned and placed in detention pending review of their cases. Around 40,000 Ethiopian citizens living in Eritrea returned to Ethiopia as a result of the conflict.

Due to the conflict between the army and the forces of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in **Uganda**, the number of displaced people in Kitgum and Gulu districts, in the North, rose to more than 400,000. In **Kenya**, ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley escalated in the first half of the year, causing the death of at least 127 persons and the displacement of thousands of others. Government critics, including human rights defenders, pro-democracy campaigners and journalists, were detained, ill-treated and harassed by the authorities. More than 50 prisoners died in detention. In **Sudan**, after several bomb explosions in Khartoum, in June, many political opponents were arrested, before being released without charge.

In **Angola**, the hope of implementing the 1994 peace agreement between the government and the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, gave way to an increasing armed confrontation. As a result, hundreds of people died and thousands of others were displaced. Suspected government critics and supporters of armed opposition groups were detained while UNITA abducted and deliberately and arbitrarily killed unarmed civilians.

Executions were carried out in at least eight countries, including the **DRC**. In **Zimbabwe**, two men were executed in April for murder. More than five people were sentenced to death for murder while at least seven others had their death sentences confirmed by the Supreme Court. In **Benin**, 14 people were sentenced to death, but no execution was carried out. In **Somalia**, several people were executed after being condemned to death by Islamic or clan courts which fell short of international standards. Some people were executed the same day their sentence was passed. In **Rwanda**, 22 people were executed in public in April in the first executions of people found guilty of participation in the genocide in 1994.

At least 26 countries on the continent continued to torture or ill-treat prisoners, leading in some cases to deaths in custody. In **Guinea**, after a wave of arrests amongst opposition activists in December, members of the security forces held some detainees on the ground, stamped on their hands and feet and beat them. Many Casamance civilians in **Senegal** were tortured or ill-treated while being held incommunicado for up to 10 days before being presented before a judge. A number of them had been burned with petrol-filled plastic bottles. None of these allegations were investigated. Dozens of people were tortured and some were deliberately and arbitrarily executed in **Guinea-Bissau** during the conflict which followed a military revolt in June. Senegalese and Republic of Guinea troops called in to assist government forces also carried out torture.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN AFRICA DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1999

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 20 countries in the region in 1998.

“DISAPPEARANCES”

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 11 countries.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 33 countries in the region.
- Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 20 countries.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 25 countries.

UNFAIR TRIALS

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 13 countries.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial, in 27 countries.

DEATH PENALTY

- Executions were carried out in 8 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 21 countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage taking in 14 countries.

AMERICAS

Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1999 Covering events from January to December 1998

There continued to be a huge chasm between what most governments said and the action they took to improve the human rights situation in their countries. Widespread impunity continued to block the path for a new future for human rights, while some countries took unprecedented steps to facilitate executions, effectively cutting off recourse to international bodies for the redress of human rights violations.

Against this bleak reality, the arrest of former General Augusto Pinochet in the United Kingdom in October for human rights violations committed during his military government in **Chile**, was a defining moment in the struggle against impunity. The international community had finally acted on obligations under international law to bring human rights violators to justice, whatever their status.

Despite its claim to international leadership in human rights the **USA** continued to fail to respect the fundamental promise of rights for all -- both at home and abroad. In October, Amnesty International launched a major campaign highlighting abuses by US police and prison officials, the arbitrary, unfair and racist use of the death penalty, the growing incarceration of asylum seekers and the USA's double standards regarding foreign policy and international human rights commitment.

In a worrying move which could undermine the regional mechanism for the international protection of human rights, the Government of the **Bahamas** hanged two people -- the first since 1984 -- flagrantly ignoring requests by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to spare their lives. **Trinidad and Tobago's** decision to withdraw as a state party to the American Convention on Human Rights -- which came into effect in May 1999 -- represented a serious step backwards in the continent's attempt to strengthen the Inter-American human rights system.

In an unprecedented step, **Jamaica** withdrew from the (first) Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) -- effectively depriving all of its citizens recourse to this international body to redress violations of their human rights. **Trinidad and Tobago's** withdrawal, and subsequent re-accession to this Protocol, was made with a reservation that attempts to prevent anyone under sentence of death from petitioning the UN Human Rights Committee. Similar actions by **Guyana** took effect in March 1999. Such actions were also threatened by **Guatemala**.

The **USA** was the only country known in the world to have executed juvenile offenders in 1998. In an attempt to sanitize the method of inducing death, **Guatemala** carried out its first execution by lethal injection, again in defiance of requests by the IACHR. The execution was botched: it took 18 minutes for the man to die despite assurances that it would be "*over in 30 seconds*".

A prolonged political crisis which posed a serious threat to **Paraguay's** fledgling democracy culminated in the assassination of Vice President Luis María Argaña in March, and the almost immediate resignation of President Cubas. **Ecuador**, under the new government of President Jamil Mahuad Witt, faced a potential human rights crisis following the declaration of states of emergency and the assassination of opposition parliamentarian Jaime Hurtado in February.

Torture, ill-treatment and murder by police and security forces, and armed groups acting with their support and acquiescence, continued to be rife in the region. Such violations were reported in **Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay** and **Venezuela**.

In **Brazil** hundreds of people were killed by police and “death squads” linked to the security forces, while most of those responsible for these human rights violations walked free. In **Haiti**, at least 24 people were shot dead by police in disputed circumstances, and at least three people died in custody. The UN Special Rapporteur on torture concluded that torture and ill-treatment were frequent occurrences in many parts of **Mexico**.

Despite agreements to hold peace talks between **Colombia’s** new government and armed opposition groups, armed conflict continued to ravage most areas of the country. More than 1,000 civilians were killed by the security forces or paramilitary groups operating with their support or acquiescence. Many victims were tortured before being killed, and at least 150 people “disappeared” after capture by paramilitary groups. Although several army officers were charged in connection with human rights violations, many others continued to evade accountability.

Armed opposition groups continued to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law in **Colombia** and **Peru**, including deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians.

Defending human rights became a life-threatening undertaking in countries such as **Bolivia**, **Brazil**, **Colombia**, **Guatemala**, **Honduras** and **Venezuela** as members of human rights non-governmental organizations, journalists, land activists and lawyers, for example, were threatened, intimidated or even murdered.

Attacks and harassment continued to be occupational hazards for journalists in **Argentina** and **Colombia** and seem to have escalated to a worrying degree seriously jeopardizing freedom of expression. In **Mexico**, the government expelled dozens of foreign nationals who were on missions to monitor the deteriorating human rights situation. In **Peru**, death threats and other acts of intimidation were directed at critics of the government.

In **Peru**, at least 600 prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience falsely accused of terrorism-related crimes remained in prison. In **Cuba**, the release of at least 150 political prisoners, including 30 prisoners of conscience, following the Pope’s visit in January offered some hope for a new future for human rights. However, at least 350 others remained imprisoned and many political dissidents were detained for short periods or harassed.

The murder of Auxiliary Bishop Juan Gerardi -- who spearheaded a report documenting human rights violations committed during Guatemala’s long-term “dirty war” -- reminded the world that **Guatemala** had not escaped from its tragic past. There was little progress in bringing to justice those responsible for past human rights violations, although the horror documented by Amnesty International for more than three decades was finally recognized in the report of the Historical Clarification Commission this year.

In **Argentina**, the judicial decision to intensify investigations into the fate of “disappeared” children by ordering the detention of the former head of the country’s first military junta was a step towards tackling the outstanding debt of the country’s “dirty war”. In **Mexico**, however, hundreds of “disappearances” from previous years remained unsolved. In spite of some attempts to improve the human rights situation in **Haiti**, the government failed to establish a strong legal framework which would guarantee access to justice for victims of human rights abuses, both past and present.

Prison conditions remained extremely harsh throughout the region, including in **Brazil**, **Colombia**, **Cuba**, **Jamaica**, **Peru**, **Trinidad and Tobago**, **United States** and **Venezuela** -- in some cases constituting cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN AMERICAS DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1999

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 9 countries in the region in 1998.

“DISAPPEARANCES”

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 7 countries.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 21 countries in the region.
- Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 6 countries.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 5 countries.

UNFAIR TRIALS

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 3 countries.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial, in 7 countries.

DEATH PENALTY

- Executions were carried out in 4 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 9 countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 2 countries.

ASIA/PACIFIC

Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1999 Covering events from January to December 1998

Although serious human rights problems persisted across Asia, aggravated in some countries by the economic crisis, 1998 also saw some positive developments in the region.

More than 150 political prisoners, including long-term prisoners of conscience, were released in two presidential amnesties in **South Korea**. In **Indonesia and East Timor**, at least 179 political prisoners were released, including three seriously ill men who had been in prison since 1965. Long-time prisoners of conscience were also among more than 7,000 prisoners released in two amnesties in **Viet Nam**.

Other positive developments included fledgling legal and institutional reforms in **Indonesia** as it ratified the UN Convention against Torture and approved new laws covering elections and the formation of political parties. **China** signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Human rights protection in **Taiwan** was strengthened as its revised code of criminal procedure came into effect. **Nepal** reinforced its opposition to the death penalty by signing the ICCPR's (second) Optional Protocol.

In a landmark judgment, five members of **Sri Lanka's** security forces were found guilty of *rape, "disappearance" and murder, sending a message that the authorities would crack down on human rights violations committed by their troops.*

Yet across Asia, human rights continued to be abused, particularly as a result of the deepening economic crisis. In **South Korea**, hundreds of trade unionists were detained following public protests and strikes over widespread job losses. In **Thailand**, Burmese asylum-seekers and refugees were arrested and detained for "illegal immigration" as the country struggled with its economic crisis. Four university students were unlawfully killed by the military in Jakarta, **Indonesia**, as disquiet over former President's Suharto's re-election and the country's deepening economic crisis culminated in two days' rioting, during which more than 1,000 people died.

The human rights situation in **North Korea** was believed grave, although the international community remained unable to adequately monitor developments because of government restrictions on access and information. Thousands more people died due to severe food shortages; there were reports of food being distributed according to loyalty to the State and economic productivity and not reaching many of the most vulnerable groups.

Flagrant abuse of security legislation to silence dissidents and political opponents continued across Asia. In **China**, new legal provisions on state security introduced in 1997 were used for the first time in the trials of high profile dissidents who were sentenced in December to prison terms of 11 to 13 years. In **Malaysia**, former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and 16 of his political associates were arrested under the Internal Security Act, which allows for detention without charge or trial for up to two years, renewable indefinitely.

Special legislation, such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, continued to facilitate human rights violations in conflict prone parts of **India**, such as Jammu and Kashmir and the north-eastern states. **Pakistan** authorised the setting up of summary military courts for fast-track trials of civilians, resulting in death sentences and executions. Approximately 1,800 people were arrested for

political reasons in **Nepal**, including scores of possible prisoners of conscience. The authorities in **Bhutan** used the National Security Act to arrest and detain suspected members or supporters of the pro-democracy movement.

As **Sri Lanka**'s state of emergency continued, the government arrested and detained thousands of Tamil people, many of them possible prisoners of conscience. In **Myanmar**, hundreds of peaceful opposition activists were arrested in a renewed government crackdown on the National League for Democracy and students. Concerns grew that government leaders in **Singapore** were misusing civil defamation suits to silence political opponents and stop them from participating freely in public life. Many people -- possibly hundreds -- were detained by **Cambodian** security forces in September, mostly for the peaceful expression of their political views. Some were released shortly after, but dozens of others remained unaccounted for at the end of the year.

Minority groups still suffered at the hands of the government or armed political groups -- in **Afghanistan** several thousand civilians were taken prisoner, including suspected Taleban opponents and members of non-Pashtun minorities, particularly Hazaras. Almost all were tortured or ill-treated, and thousands more were deliberately and systematically killed. In Jammu and Kashmir in northern **India**, dozens of unarmed men, women and children of the Hindu minority were deliberately killed, allegedly by armed opposition groups.

In **China**, security forces continued to crack-down on suspected Uighur nationalists and independent Muslim leaders in Xinjiang, and on Tibetan nationalists and Buddhists. At least 10 prisoners reportedly died following a protest at Drapchi prison in Tibet around the time of a European Union visit in May. In **Myanmar**, members of ethnic minorities were routinely seized by the military for forced labour.

Criminal justice continued to be harshly applied and enforced. Internal rules governing almost every aspect of prisoners' lives in **Japan** remained confidential and secret, ostensibly on grounds of national security. Prisoners were severely punished for minor infractions -- like making eye contact with other prisoners or talking outside designated times -- by for instance being forced to kneel or sit in the same position every day for up to two months.

Australia introduced new juvenile justice policies resulting in the detention of minors -- particularly Aboriginal children -- in sometimes cruel, inhuman or degrading circumstances. Juvenile criminal suspects as young as 11 were detained in police cells for adults or in juvenile detention centres up to 1,500 kilometres from home. In the face of international outrage, the **Philippines** set the date for its first execution since 1976.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN ASIA/PACIFIC DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1999

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 9 countries in the region in 1998.

“DISAPPEARANCES”

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 7 countries.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 22 countries in the region.
- Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 11 countries.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 16 countries.

UNFAIR TRIALS

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 4 countries.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 9 countries.

DEATH PENALTY

- Executions were carried out in 8 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 16 countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 10 countries.

EUROPE

Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1999 Covering events from January to December 1998

Torture and ill-treatment -- in some cases leading to death -- by police and security forces continued to be the most widely reported human rights violations in the Europe region. In many cases, these acts were racially motivated.

In November, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern about the number of deaths in police custody in the **United Kingdom** and the apparent failure of the state to provide effective mechanisms to deal with allegations of abuse, including racist verbal abuse, by police and prison authorities. In addition, the government failed to implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers aimed at preventing widespread police intimidation and harassment of lawyers in Northern Ireland.

Throughout the year, there were also numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment of Roma by law enforcement officials in **Bulgaria**. Furthermore, at least nine people in that country were killed by police in disputed circumstances. Although there was an overall reduction in the number of reported cases in **Turkey**, torture -- including sexual assault and the torture of children -- continued to be commonplace; there were reports of at least 10 deaths in custody apparently as a result of torture.

Alleged ill treatment by police officers in **Switzerland** often concerned foreign nationals -- in March the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about "serious incidents of police brutality in dealing with persons of foreign ethnic or national origin".

Racially motivated assaults by law enforcement officers were also reported in **Spain** and **Portugal**, including a report that a Moroccan national was repeatedly beaten, trampled on and racially abused in Spain in August. Only five months previously, an Amnesty International delegation had expressed its concerns regarding torture, ill-treatment and a perceptible increase in racially motivated assaults by law enforcement officers to the Minister of Interior of the Spanish government.

Reports of ill-treatment by law enforcement officers and prison guards also continued to be received from **France**, with many victims of non-European origin -- particularly asylum-seekers. In September, three Sri Lankans claimed they were kicked, punched and muzzled by French police while being forcibly expelled from France.

In **Germany**, there were also allegations of police ill-treatment of foreign nationals, particularly asylum-seekers and members of ethnic minorities. In May, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern at the "particularly low rate of prosecution and conviction in alleged incidents of ill-treatment by the [German] police, especially of people of foreign descent". In **Belgium** there were a number of allegations throughout the year of foreign nationals being physically assaulted and subjected to dangerous methods of restraint during forcible deportations -- including a Nigerian national who died in September within hours of an attempt to forcibly deport her from Brussels National Airport.

Every year more countries abolish the death penalty worldwide. In 1998 this trend continued, with **Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Estonia** and **Lithuania** abolishing the death penalty for all crimes. The **United Kingdom** also abolished the death penalty for all civil crimes, while **Turkmenistan** and **Kyrgyzstan** both instituted moratoria on the death penalty in December.

However, Amnesty International continued to have concerns regarding the death penalty in Europe. Although 1998 was proclaimed “the year of human rights” in the **Russian Federation** by President Yeltsin, about 900 prisoners remained under sentence of death. In August the government pledged to abolish the death penalty by April 1999, but senior Russian officials later spoke in favour of capital punishment.

Amnesty International also exerted pressure on the government to abolish the death penalty in the **Ukraine**, where at least 345 prisoners remained under sentence of death at the end of the year. The Council of Europe stated that the Ukrainian delegation’s credentials would be annulled in June 1999 if the country’s commitment to make significant progress in abolishing the death penalty had not been honoured.

Cases of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience continued to be reported throughout the region. In **Greece**, about 80 prisoners of conscience who objected to military service on religious grounds remained in prison until their release at the end of the year -- two others continue to serve prison sentences for conscientious objection. In **Turkey** hundreds of people were detained because of their non-violent political activities.

In **Uzbekistan**, one prisoner of conscience and at least three possible prisoners of conscience were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment while one political prisoner was sentenced to death in a climate of intolerance against independent Islamic congregations -- exemplified by the President’s statement to Parliament in May that “fundamentalists should be shot”. In **Belarus**, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were detained, including prisoners of conscience -- many were severely beaten by police.

Prison conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment also continued to be reported. In **Albania**, one prisoner was reportedly held for at least five months with his hands and feet in chains and an iron helmet on his head. There were reports of severe prison and detention centre overcrowding in several countries including **Russia** and **Greece**, where detainees also suffered from very limited access to medical facilities.

Unresolved “disappearances” also continued to be a major concern in the region, with more than 19,000 people remaining unaccounted for in **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, while in **Croatia**, the fate of more than 2,000 people following the 1991-1995 armed conflict remained unclear. In **Turkey** five people reportedly “disappeared” and at least 15 others are thought to have been killed by the authorities.

In a prelude of events to come, hundreds of ethnic Albanians “disappeared” at the hands of security forces in the Kosovo province of the **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia** -- many of them were deliberately and arbitrarily killed by the police, army or civilians armed by the authorities. In addition, 100 Serbs went “missing” after having been captured by armed ethnic Albanian opposition groups. More than 250,000 people were displaced -- many of them forcibly -- by soldiers, police or opposition ethnic Albanian forces. In addition, five ethnic Albanians died in police custody apparently as a result of torture or ill-treatment -- all of them in the Kosovo province.

In **Yugoslavia** as well as other countries across the region, armed opposition forces were responsible for human rights abuses, including the abduction of many people who remain unaccounted for. In Spain, the armed opposition group ETA continued to commit human rights abuses, including deliberate killings of political representatives, before declaring an indefinite cease-fire in September. Armed opposition groups were responsible for at least 39 deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians and prisoners in **Turkey**. In the **United Kingdom**, 55 people were killed by members of armed political groups -- both Loyalist and Republican -- in Northern Ireland.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN EUROPE DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ANNUAL REPORT 1999

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 4 countries in the region in 1998.

“DISAPPEARANCES”

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 4 countries.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 31 countries in the region.
- Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 4 countries.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 15 countries.

UNFAIR TRIALS

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 5 countries.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 10 countries.

DEATH PENALTY

- Executions were carried out in 4 countries
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 14 countries

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 6 countries.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Highlights of Amnesty International Report 1999 Covering events from January to December 1998

In 1998, the year that marked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the death penalty continued to be widely used in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Other human rights abuses include torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, killings of civilians and “disappearances.”

On the positive side, in **Syria**, hundreds of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, were released following presidential amnesties. In **Morocco** 28 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience were released under an amnesty in October. In **Kuwait**, several political prisoners held after unfair trials in 1991 were also released.

In **Algeria** the level of violence remained high throughout the year, but appeared to be lower than in previous years. Thousands of civilians were killed and grave human rights abuses were committed by security forces, paramilitary militias armed by the state and armed groups which define themselves as “Islamic groups”. In January, the largest massacre during the year occurred in Relizane, in the west of the country. Some 200 men, women and children were killed by an armed group. Torture and ill-treatment by security forces remained widespread and torture, including rapes, by armed groups also continued. Dozens of people “disappeared” after arrest by security forces and thousands who “disappeared” during previous years remained unaccounted for. Scores of others were abducted by armed groups. Often responsibility for human rights abuses could not be established because security forces, militias and armed groups adopted similar patterns of conduct.

The government rejected calls from the international community and in particular from the UN Special rapporteurs on torture and extrajudicial executions, the European Union and the UN Secretary-General, to investigate or discuss the situation. International non-governmental human rights organizations continued to be refused access to the country throughout the year.

Executions were carried out in at least 12 countries last year, while several hundred people were still under sentence of death in at least 16 countries.

In **Yemen**, hundreds of prisoners were believed to be under sentence of death at the end of the year, although the exact number was not known. At least 17 people were executed. In **Oman**, at least six people, all foreign nationals, were executed for murder after unfair trials. In **Iraq**, death sentences continued to be imposed and carried out on a large scale, some for non-violent offences. In **Iran**, the death penalty continued to be widely used, often imposed for vaguely worded *offences*. *Scores of executions were reported, including a number in public. Yet* the true figure may be considerably higher.

The exact number of prisoners under sentence of death in **Saudi Arabia** at the end of 1998 remained unknown as the government continued to keep such information secret. At least two people were executed last year in **Lebanon**. In May, Hasan Nada Abu Jabal and Wisam Nayif ‘Issa were hanged in public in Beirut. Their bodies remained on display for an hour and the executions were

broadcast by television stations in Lebanon and abroad. At least nine people were executed in **Jordan**, including one man whose sentence to life imprisonment was over-turned by the Court of Cassation. Fourteen people were sentenced to death.

Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners continued to be widespread in the region. In **Israel and the Occupied Territories**, these are officially sanctioned and used systematically during interrogation of Palestinian security detainees. Official secret guidelines allowed the General Security Service (GSS) to use “moderate” physical pressure, including *tiltul* (violent shaking), and psychological pressure. In areas under the jurisdiction of the **Palestinian Authority**, three people died in custody in circumstances where torture or ill-treatment seemed to have caused or hastened their deaths.

In **Egypt**, torture of political prisoners continued to be systematic in the headquarters of the infamous State Security Investigations (SSI) headquarters in Cairo and branches throughout the country, as well as in police stations and sometimes in prisons. The most common methods of torture were electric shocks, beatings, suspension by the wrists or ankles and burning with cigarettes. There were also various forms of psychological torture, including death threats and threats of rape or sexual abuse of the detainee or female relatives.

In **Iran**, judicial punishments of flogging and stoning continued to be imposed. In many cases, detainees were tortured to elicit confessions or to incriminate others. In **Bahrain**, detainees and suspected political opponents were tortured or ill-treated mainly during the first days after arrest in order to extract information. In the **United Arab Emirates**, punishments included flogging and amputations. Three Omani nationals who confessed to robbery were sentenced by a court to amputation of their right hand.

In Tunisia, human rights defenders were increasingly targeted by the authorities. Khemais Ksila, Vice-President of the Ligue tunisienne des droits de l'homme (LTDH), Tunisian Human Rights League, detained since the previous year, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in February for criticizing the deterioration of the human rights situation in Tunisia in a communique which he had published in September 1997. His wife and children were subjected to harassment and surveillance by security forces.

In many countries of the region, trials continued to violate international fair standards. In **Kuwait**, scores of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, continued to be detained, following conviction on charges of “collaboration” during the occupation of the country by Iraqi forces. They had been tried before the Martial Law Court and State Security Court since 1991 in unfair trials. In **Lebanon**, dozens of political prisoners were tried during the year by the Military Court and the Justice Council whose proceedings fell short of international fair trial standards.

In **Syria**, hundreds of Palestinians and Jordanians remained “disappeared” or held incommunicado since their arrest for political reasons since the 1980s in Lebanon, Syria or at the Syrian border with Jordan. Scores of Lebanese political prisoners, captured or abducted during the civil war in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, continued to be held in Syria either without charge or after grossly unfair trials. In many cases, political prisoners faced harsh prison conditions and denial of medical care.

**HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MIDDLE EAST AND
NORTH AFRICA
DETAILED IN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S
ANNUAL REPORT 1999**

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 5 countries in the region in 1998.

“DISAPPEARANCES”

- People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 8 countries.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

- People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 18 countries in the region.
- Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 8 countries.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 17 countries.

UNFAIR TRIALS

- Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 10 countries.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 13 countries.

DEATH PENALTY

- Executions were carried out in 12 countries.
- Prisoners were under sentence of death in 17 countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 5 countries.