
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 234/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - BULGARIA, HAITI

PLEASE NOTE: Due to delivery problems, the Rwandese government did not receive the document scheduled for release on Friday 14 October. In order to give the government sufficient opportunity to respond to our concerns, the document release has been cancelled for this Friday, but will be re-scheduled for a later date. In the next news service, we will inform you of the new date for releasing the Rwanda document. So please hold onto the Rwanda document and do not send out to your media yet.

INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

France - 0001 hrs GMT 12 October - PLEASE NOTE EXACT EMBARGO TIME SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Rwanda - 14 October - CANCELLED - DO NOT RELEASE UNTIL NEW DATE IS FIXED!

Burundi - 21 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 230/94

Algeria - 25 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

APEC - 3 November -SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

Iraq - 29 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

** Turkey - 24 OCTOBER ** - PLEASE NOTE NEW EMBARGO DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

News Service 234/94

AI INDEX: EUR 15/WU 04/94
10 OCTOBER 1994

BULGARIA: ANOTHER ROM DIES IN CUSTODY IN SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

In the same month that Amnesty International published a report on cases of police ill-treatment of Roma, including two cases in which alleged torture apparently resulted in death, another member of that community has died in custody.

Slavcho Lyubenov Tsonchev was reportedly tortured before dying in custody. The human rights organization believes this treatment may have been racially motivated and has written to President Zhelyu Zhelev of Bulgaria expressing its concern.

"This is the third such death in custody of a member of the Roma community in just over a year, and makes the Bulgarian Government's implementation of the recommendations specified in our report even more urgent," Amnesty International said.

Slavcho Lyubenov Tsonchev was arrested and taken to Pleven Regional Police Department on 24 September on suspicion of stealing several cows. The following day his wife was informed that her husband had died. While identifying Slavcho Lyubenov Tsonchev's body she observed bruises and lesions on his face, and the death certificate noted the presence of haematoma all over his body and limbs.

An investigation has been started into Slavcho Lyubenov Tsonchev's death. Amnesty International is urging President Zhelev to ensure that this investigation is independent and impartial, that its findings are made public and that anyone responsible for human rights violations is brought to justice.

Roma throughout Bulgaria have reportedly been subjected to beatings and ill-treatment by law enforcement officers. Amnesty International believes that in most instances such treatment is racially motivated and is concerned that the ill-treatment of Roma is one of the major human rights problems in Bulgaria. The Roma have also reportedly been subjected to acts of racial violence from which the authorities have apparently failed to adequately protect them.

In the past two years Amnesty International has repeatedly raised such cases with the Bulgarian authorities. Since October 1992 when the organization received a reply that the Ministry of the Interior was conducting an investigation into allegations of ill-treatment of Roma in Pazardjik in June 1992, Amnesty International has not received any information as to whether this or any subsequent investigations it has called for have been completed.

"The Bulgarian Government's apparent lack of will to properly investigate these human rights abuses is an indication of a discriminatory policy towards its Roma citizens," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International is calling on the Bulgarian Government to:

- Initiate the establishment of an independent commission, empowered to conduct a full and impartial inquiry into all allegations of ill-treatment of Roma in Bulgaria.
- Ensure that law enforcement officials should have a basic knowledge of the rights it is their duty to

protect and are given a thorough understanding of national and international human rights standards.

- Take measures to create public confidence that all allegations of torture or ill-treatment will be investigated promptly, impartially, openly and thoroughly.

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News Service 234/94

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10 OCTOBER 1994

HAITI: WHAT FATE FOR THOSE STILL HELD IN HAITI'S PRISONS AND JAILS?

Hundreds of prisoners detained by Haiti's *de facto* military rulers and still being held could be in danger from Haitian security forces seeking to eliminate them as potential witnesses to torture, ill-treatment and other abuses endured while in custody.

"As the power of the Haitian military and paramilitaries appears to crumble, they have an obvious motive in silencing those victims of human rights violations who could identify them," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International urgently requests the commanders of the multinational military operation in Haiti to compile immediately a full list of all installations where such prisoners are held and to carry out a complete census of all people currently held in Haitian jails and prisons.

"This listing and census -- required under international standards -- is critical to establish the whereabouts of those detained by the former government and to ensure their safety," Amnesty International said.

All institutions, national and international, that have compiled or have access to information about those detained by the *de facto* military authorities should make this information immediately available.

Amnesty International also urges the United States (US) and other foreign forces taking control of detention centres to publicize the names of all prisoners found there and to ensure that their families are immediately informed that their relatives are alive.

For example, Amnesty International has received recent reports that US forces have entered the prison at the Haitian army headquarters in the southern town of Les Cayes. They are said to have found about 35 prisoners, some as young as 14, and some in deplorable physical condition.

Many of the prisoners reportedly discovered by US forces at Les Cayes, as well as others in prisons and jails said to be under US control, had virtually "disappeared" since incarceration. These prisoners must be given immediate access to their families, lawyers and to medical care, the human rights organization said.

"Any prisoners not charged with a recognizably criminal offence should be charged or released," Amnesty International said. "The authorities now in control of these prisons and jails are responsible for ensuring that the prison conditions do not amount to torture or ill-treatment and that prisoners get a fair trial."

Amnesty International is also aware of reports that US military personnel are performing law enforcement functions by detaining Haitians, and in some cases, US citizens who had apparently been operating with Haitian security and paramilitary forces. Amnesty International calls for the commanders of forces making these detentions to spell out the exact legal grounds or procedures under which foreign forces

are making arrests, where such prisoners are being held and under what conditions, and how their cases will be handled.

"Whether they are detainees of the former *de facto* military government or of the multinational forces, in either case prisoners' names must be made publicly known, and their families, lawyers and doctors given speedy and reasonable access to them," Amnesty International said.

Finally, US forces have appeared to react on an *ad hoc* basis to different public order disturbances. Amnesty International is concerned that contradictory statements by various US officials about the law enforcement responsibilities these forces exercise is creating confusion and uncertainty that could lead to human rights violations.

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