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Selected statistics* on human rights violation in the USA

Taken from *Rights for All* -- Amnesty International's report on human rights in the United States of America and *Amnesty International's 1998 Annual Report

Prison Conditions

The number of people in US prisons and jails tripled between 1980 and 1996 to more than 1.7 million. The number of women in prisons and jails has quadrupled over the same period. (Chapter I, p.7)

In mid-1997 there were 1.7 million people incarcerated in US prisons and jails, more than three times the 1980 figure. (Chapter IV, p.56)

Over 60 percent of prisoners are from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. (Chapter IV, p.56)

Asylum-Seekers

The number of those detained under the authority of the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) has soared, rising by 75 percent between 1996 and 1998. In early 1998 the INS had "bed spaces" for an estimated 15,050 detainees and the INS anticipated that this would rise to 24,000 by the year 2001, when most of the detainees would be held in jails. (Chapter V, p.89)

Death Penalty

More than 350 people have been executed in the USA since 1990. (Chapter VI, p.99)

In 1997 the USA carried out 74 executions -- the highest number for four decades. Only China, Saudi Arabia and Iran were known to have executed more prisoners. Over 3,300 people await their deaths at the hands of US authorities. (Chapter VI, pp. 99-100)

More than 100 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. (Chapter VI, p.100)

By 1998, laws allowing for the use of the death penalty existed in 38 states in the USA. (Chapter VI, p.101)

As of June 1998, 43 women remained on death row in 15 states. (Chapter VI, p.105)

In late 1994 the District Attorney of Oklahoma City campaigned for reelection on his record of having "sent 44 murderers to death row." (Chapter VI, p.106)

Between 1908 and 1962, all those executed for rape were black, although only 55 percent of those imprisoned for rape were black. (Chapter VI, p.109)

Blacks and whites in the USA are the victims of murder in almost equal numbers, yet 82 percent of prisoners executed since 1977 were convicted of the murder of a white person. (Chapter VI, p.109)

A recent study, made public in June 1998, found that in Philadelphia the likelihood of receiving a death sentence is nearly four times higher if the defendant is black, after taking into account aggravating factors. (Chapter VI, p.109)

Since Pennsylvania reintroduced the death penalty in 1978, the authorities in Philadelphia have sentenced to death more than eight times as many blacks as whites. (Chapter VI, p.109)

Blacks make up just 12 percent of the country's population, but 42 percent of the nation's condemned prisoners. In early 1998, of the 26 people under federal sentences of death (military and civilian), only five prisoners were white. (Chapter VI, p.109)

The overwhelming majority of the district attorneys and other officials who make the decision as to whether to seek the death penalty are white. (Chapter VI, p.109)

In many counties, black prospective jurors are disproportionately removed from the jury pool by prosecutors during jury selection. In Georgia, six of the 12 black prisoners executed since 1983 were convicted and sentenced by all-white juries after all black nominees had been removed. (Chapter VI, p.110)

In May 1998, more than 25 people were on death row in Texas for crimes they committed when under 18. (Chapter VI, p.113)

The USA has executed eight juvenile offenders since 1990. (Chapter VI, p.113)

In April 1998, Nebraska became the 12th state to adopt a law banning the execution of mentally retarded prisoners. (Chapter VI, p.115)

Twenty-four states in the USA allow for the use of the death penalty for crimes committed under the age of 18. (Chapter VI, p.122)

More than 350 prisoners have been executed since 1990. Some were children when the crimes were committed: some were severely mentally impaired. Another 3,300 people are on death row, put there by a system whose application of the death penalty is arbitrary and subject to racial and class bias. (Chapter IX, p. 149)

The number executed since the end of the moratorium on the death penalty in 1977 is 467. Thirty-five people have been executed in 1998 (as of July 1998). (*Amnesty International's 1998 Annual Report*, p. 350)

Of 62 foreign nationals known to be under sentence of death, most had effectively been denied access to consular assistance -- in violation of international law. (*Amnesty International's 1998 Annual Report*, p. 350)
