



Tunisia: torturing detainees

At least one thousand people, including juveniles, suspected of terrorism-related offences have been arrested in Tunisia since 2003. Many have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated while detained without access to the outside world. Some have received long prison terms following unfair trials.

In spite of this, Tunisia is not widely perceived as a country in which serious human rights violations are committed. Indeed, during a state visit to the country in April 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy praised the Tunisian government's efforts in fighting terrorism and declared that "the sphere of liberties" in the country was improving.

Tunisian detainees, however, tell a different story. When Houssine Tarkhani was forcibly returned from France to Tunisia in June 2007, he was detained by the authorities upon arrival. He later told his lawyer that while being held in incommunicado detention he was beaten with a stick all over his body, given electric shocks and threatened with death.

Individuals detained on suspicion of involvement in terrorism-related offences are frequently held by the Department of State Security in incommunicado detention for weeks or even months; their detentions are not acknowledged, their whereabouts are concealed and they are left outside the protection of the law.

Arrest dates are frequently falsified by state security officials, particularly in political and security cases, so that they can hold detainees secretly and illegally for several weeks while creating the illusion that they are operating within the law. Most allegations of torture and ill-treatment relate to the periods before detainees are officially recorded as having been arrested.

Detainees are tortured or ill-treated to extract "confessions" that may later be submitted as evidence at trial, and to punish and intimidate. The most commonly reported methods of torture are beatings, especially on the soles of the feet; suspension by the ankles or in contorted positions; electric shocks; and burning with cigarettes.

Trials of suspects charged with terrorism-related offences fail to satisfy international standards of fair trial. Judges accept as evidence information extracted under torture and detainees are denied access to lawyers and the opportunity to prepare their defence adequately. Many civilian detainees appear before military courts which do not provide for due process safeguards; this means, among other things, that they lose their right to appeal.

Under Tunisian law the death penalty can be imposed for a wide range of offences. While the authorities have not carried out any executions since 1991, the courts still impose death sentences and do so without ensuring that fundamental fair trial safeguards are applied. Saber Ragoubi, for example, was tried unfairly and sentenced to death in December 2007; his sentence was confirmed by Tunisia's highest court of appeal on 23 May 2008.

For more information on the plight of detainees in Tunisia see *Tunisia: Torture, illegal detention and unfair trials* (MDE 30/005/2008).



French President Nicolas Sarkozy, left, is greeted by Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali during a welcoming ceremony in Tunis.



Demonstration in Cuernavaca, Morelos state, to remember women victims of violence and demand justice, November 2006.

Violence against women in the home continues in Mexico

Thousands of women in Mexico live in fear of violence from their partners or family members. Some are living with the serious physical and/or psychological consequences of years of abuse. The effects of violence within families can reach down through generations. Nevertheless, violence against women in the home is still often treated as a private matter and not a serious human rights violation.

Marcela Blumenkron Romero was left paralyzed for four months and with serious long-term nerve damage and limited mobility after her former husband broke into her home in Hermosillo, Sonora state, and stabbed her in August 2005. In the three months leading up to the attack, Marcela Blumenkron had filed six complaints against her husband with the public prosecutor's office for sexual harassment, intimidation and death threats. On one occasion she was told, "When you come with a bruise, we'll do something."

In a different case, Susana, a 24-year-old mother of two, found that the women's shelter in Hermosillo was the only institution to offer her protection from a partner who had subjected her to 10 years of physical and psychological violence. The response by the local public prosecutor's office to her numerous complaints was that it was not a crime. Susana and her children hid with relatives until she was eventually referred to the shelter.

There are many other stories like Marcela's and Susana's. Although some progress has been made in recent years by the Mexican authorities, such as the criminalization of domestic violence in many states and 2007 federal legislation to ensure women's access to a life free from violence, the effects have yet to be felt on the ground.

Nationwide surveys reveal that high levels of violence against women in the home are not matched by the number of official complaints

recorded. There are significant reasons for this: the real fear of reprisals deters many women from reporting their abuser, and many are afraid they will not be taken seriously by officials. Several of those interviewed by Amnesty International said that when they tried to report violence, they were told either that their cases were not serious enough to pursue or that there was not enough time to deal with their case. Even in cases that are registered, failure to consistently conduct full medical evaluations, including the psychological impact of abuse, prevents effective prosecutions. In many instances women are made even more vulnerable by being required to personally deliver summons letters to their attackers.

As protection or restraining orders are rarely used or enforced, many women find that the sanctuary of a shelter is often their best guarantee of safety. There are 60 shelters for survivors throughout Mexico, many of them run by non-governmental organizations, and they play an important role in providing women and their children with temporary refuge as well as medical and psychological treatment and legal advice. However, there remains an urgent need for more good quality shelters to be established.

The Mexican government has committed itself to improve respect for women's rights, including the prevention and punishment of violence against women. It is time to ensure that federal and state governments remove the barriers that many women across the country currently face in accessing safety and justice and deliver the real improvements in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for committing crimes of violence against women.

For more information see *Women's struggle for safety and justice - violence in the family in Mexico* (AMR 41/021/2008).

Inside

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Ongoing impunity for police violence in Africa



Police officers detain an opposition supporter during riots at the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya, 31 December 2007.

When police officers themselves commit crimes without fear of investigation or punishment, who upholds the rule of law? In many countries across Africa, police violate human rights by using torture or excessive force. Their conduct is often not investigated, even when people have been killed, and few are ever held to account.

On 8 November 2007 in Mozambique, police shot and killed Julio Naftal in his hotel room in Inhambane Province. Soon after, police authorities announced they had captured and killed Agostinho Chauque – “public enemy number one”. It was only after journalists asked to see the body that police conceded they had not actually caught “public enemy number one”, but had killed “a dangerous criminal”. However, community members who knew Julio Naftal protested that he was not a criminal. No officer has been held responsible for his death and the authorities have not contacted his family to explain the circumstances surrounding his death.

As in many African countries, the Mozambique authorities rarely investigate allegations of abuse by police. Few police officers are ever disciplined or held criminally responsible for deaths such as Julio Naftal's.

In Angola, police have often been used to carry out unlawful orders or to protect those violating human rights. On 24 July 2007, members of the national and military police demolished houses

and forcibly evicted families from Comandante Jika neighbourhood of Luanda. The national police detained the coordinator of the Residents' Committee, Ramos Pinto, for more than five hours when he pleaded with them to stop the demolitions. National police also stood by as the military police beat people with hoses and guns.

Some units of the Zimbabwe police – particularly the Law and Order Section – enjoy complete impunity for assault or torture of critics of the government. In one of many incidents, on 25 July 2007, approximately 200 activists were arrested during a peaceful march, and beaten. After they were released, 32 needed hospital treatment, including a 19-month-old baby beaten with a baton stick. Nineteen had fractured limbs. Detainees are often ill-treated and denied access to lawyers, food and medicine. While international efforts continue to try to break the country's political deadlock, the people of Zimbabwe continue to suffer from food shortages, high unemployment, rampant inflation and unchecked police violence.

More than 1,200 Kenyans died as a result of politically and ethnically motivated killings by groups of armed youth following disputed election results in December 2007. Some were killed by police using reckless and excessive force to quell the violence and break up mass protests by opposition demonstrators. In some cases police fired live ammunition into crowds of demonstrators. Only in one isolated case has a police officer been charged with murder. It is not clear if the ongoing commission of inquiry into the post-election violence will investigate alleged police killings independently and impartially and recommend action. Police violence has continued in recent months, with reports that hundreds of people have been tortured and dozens killed in the course of a joint police-military operation in Mount Elgon district, western Kenya.

Amnesty International recognizes that police officers have a hard job to do in often very difficult circumstances. However, the police are not just enforcers of the law, but its protectors as well. If they violate human rights with impunity, they undermine the rule of law.

IRAQ

Missing since December 2005

Nathum Mohammad Isma'il al-'Ani was arrested in Baghdad along with his brother-in-law, Ahmed 'Abbas Khurshid al-Salihi, on 21 December 2005 when Iraqi security forces forced their way into Nathum al-'Ani's home. Ahmed al-Salihi, who lives in Ireland, was visiting relatives in Baghdad at the time.

Both men were among 18 men arrested in December 2005, apparently on suspicion of involvement with armed groups opposed to the Iraqi government. They were blindfolded, handcuffed and taken to an unknown location for interrogation.

On or around 23 December 2005, Nathum al-'Ani, Ahmed al-Salihi and a third man were moved to what appeared to be a private house. They were detained together in a 1.5m² room for 15 days, during which time they were reportedly denied toilet facilities and food and given very little water. They are alleged to have been kicked, beaten with metal bars and partially suffocated with pillows in an attempt to extract confessions.

On 3 January 2006 the three men were returned to their original place of detention. Ahmed al-Salihi was released



a day later. It is thought that his status as an Irish resident may have contributed to his release. At the time of his release, Ahmed al-Salihi had a fractured nose and shoulder and had suffered psychological trauma. In late January 2006 the body of one of the detainees, Firas Naji 'Abid Mikhlaf, was found in Baghdad. An autopsy found that he had been strangled to death and noted injuries on his body consistent with his having been tortured. There has been no further news of the whereabouts of Nathum al-'Ani or the 15 other men.

➔ Please send appeals by email to the President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani. Ask for the whereabouts of Nathum Mohammad Isma'il al-'Ani and the other missing detainees to be made public and for their families to be informed whether they are alive or dead. Express concern that some may have been tortured, and call for an urgent and impartial investigation and for those responsible to be brought to justice.
Email: questions@iraqipresidency.net
Please also send copies of your letter to the Iraqi representative in your country.

EL SALVADOR

Disappeared children of El Salvador

Sisters Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz were aged seven and three respectively when they disappeared on 2 June 1982. According to witnesses, they were captured by the Salvadorean army in the city of Chalatenango during the 1980-1992 armed conflict in El Salvador.

The girls are among more than 700 children who disappeared during the armed conflict. As in many other cases, the first complaint was made in 1993, after the conflict had ended. The girls' mother, María Victoria Cruz Franco, submitted a complaint to the Court of First Instance in Chalatenango relating to the kidnapping of her children. However, the legal proceedings made no progress.

In February 2003 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued recommendations to the Salvadorean state, urging it to undertake a thorough, impartial and effective investigation to establish the whereabouts of Ernestina and Erlinda and bring those responsible to justice. However, the state did not comply with any of these recommendations and in June 2003 the Commission referred the case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

On 1 March 2005, the Inter-American Court ordered the state to investigate the disappearance of the sisters and bring those responsible to justice. In addition, it demanded that the Salvadorean authorities create a national commission to search for the disappeared children and a DNA database to enable their identification. A search commission has been set up but it does not fulfil the requirements of the ruling and no visible steps have been taken to create the DNA database.

➔ Please write to the Salvadorean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marisol Argueta de Barillas, calling on her to make sure that the state fully complies with the Inter-American Court ruling of 1 March 2005. The state must swiftly and thoroughly investigate the disappearances of Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz and bring those responsible to justice. It must also reform the current Inter-Institutional Commission for the Search of Disappeared Children so that it meets the standards set out in the ruling, and establish a DNA database of disappeared people and their relatives. Send appeals to: Sra. Marisol Argueta de Barillas, Foreign Affairs Minister/Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Calle El Pedregal Blvd. Cancillería, Ciudad Merliot, Antiguo Cuscatlan, El Salvador
Fax: +503 2243 9658

Enforced disappearance - the missing are not forgotten

Enforced disappearance persists in many countries around the world and has become common practice in the "war on terror". All too often, its perpetrators escape justice. Many disappeared people are detained indefinitely, their fate and whereabouts unknown to their families. They frequently endure torture and live in daily fear for their lives.

Removed from the protection of the law, they are deprived of their rights including the right to security and dignity of person, the rights to legal counsel and a fair trial. As the International Day of the Disappeared approaches on 30 August, we focus on three recent cases from Algeria, Chad and the Philippines.



Photos from left: Luisa Posa-Dominado was abducted in the Philippines by unidentified armed men on 12 April 2007. Ibrahima Ould Mahamat Saleh was arrested at his home in the Chadian capital, N'Djaména, by members of the security forces on 3 February 2008.

PHILIPPINES

On 12 April 2007, armed men abducted activists Luisa Posa-Dominado and Nilo Arado. They were being driven home from a political campaigning event in Ilo Ilo when they were stopped by a group of unidentified armed men in military fatigues. The men ordered the driver, Jose Garachico, out of the vehicle and then shot and seriously wounded him. The vehicle was found burnt out and abandoned the next day with no trace of the abductees.

Luisa Posa-Dominado, spokesperson of the Society of Ex-Detainees for Liberation against Detention and for Amnesty (SELDA), and Nilo Arado, regional co-ordinator of Anakpawis (Toiling Masses), a left-wing political party representing marginalized sectors, have not been seen since the incident.

Three hearings to consider habeas corpus writs have been held without any result because the named military officers failed to appear. Luisa Posa-Dominado's daughter, May Wan, spoke to Amnesty International in March 2008 of her frustration at the lack of progress in the investigation. She hopes that one day she will be reunited with her mother.

Politically motivated killings and enforced disappearances continue to be carried out in the Philippines. Two years after Amnesty International launched its report *Political killings, human rights and the peace process* (ASA 35/006/2006), witnesses and families of victims are still denied justice.

Amnesty International is re-launching the campaign to end impunity for political killings and enforced disappearances in the Philippines under the theme 'Witnessing Justice - Break the Chain of Impunity' on 29 August 2008.

The campaign urges the Philippine government to instigate prompt and impartial investigations, to reform the witness protection law, and ensure that prosecutions, where appropriate, result in proper accountability. International action is necessary to press the Philippine government to live up to its responsibility to protect human rights.

For more information, visit <http://asiapacific.amnesty.org>.

CHAD

Ibrahima Ould Mahamat Saleh, leader of an opposition political party and spokesperson for a political coalition, was arrested at his home in the Chadian capital, N'Djaména, by members of the Chadian security forces on 3 February 2008. He was arrested a few hours after a major armed offensive by rebel groups had been defeated by the Chadian army. No one has seen him since.

What happened to Ibrahima Ould Mahamat Saleh is very similar to the fate of more than 20 Chadian high-ranking officers and civilians arrested in April 2006 and November 2007. Since their arrests, none of these people have been seen or heard from by their families. They do not even know if the men are alive or dead.

On 13 April 2006, armed opposition movements attacked N'Djaména. In the aftermath of this attack more than 14 army officers and civilians were arrested by Chadian security forces because they were suspected of being involved. They included Army Chief of Staff Abdouramane Youssouf Seid.

On 30 November 2007, seven men including Ibrahim Idriss Ibrahim, governor of Dar Tama province, were arrested in the eastern town of Guéréda. Some were members of the former armed opposition movement FUC (United Front for Democratic Change). They were arrested during or soon after a meeting with President Idriss Déby to discuss disarming former FUC combatants.

To date, only one of the missing men has reappeared: Haroun Mahamat Abdoulaye, Sultan of Dar Tama, was released from a security facility in N'Djaména in May 2008. The Chadian authorities have persistently refused to disclose information on the whereabouts of these men and the state of their health, or to confirm whether they are alive or dead. Amnesty International delegates visited Chad in May 2008 and discussed the issue of enforced disappearances by the Chadian military with officials including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice.

ALGERIA

The Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture have in the past year challenged the Algerian authorities' inaction in addressing the thousands of enforced disappearances which occurred during a decade of violence in Algeria in the 1990s.

The two UN bodies criticized Algerian legislation passed in 2006 which bars families from discovering the fate of their disappeared relatives. Both Committees recommended that provisions granting impunity to state security forces for any of their actions be amended so as not to apply in any case involving the crime of enforced disappearance. Additionally, legislation criminalizing public criticism or dissemination of information about the security forces' conduct should be scrapped. Finally, the obligation upon the families of disappeared people to have the family member declared dead in order to be eligible for compensation should be abolished.

In May 2008, the Committee against Torture described this last provision as potentially constituting cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of the relatives of those disappeared. Families have had to endure years of anguish, not knowing their loved ones' fate.

The Committees asked the Algerian authorities to confirm the identities of those disappeared, to conduct impartial investigations into all cases of alleged enforced disappearance, to bring those responsible to justice and to provide full redress and compensation to the relatives of the disappeared. The Human Rights Committee asked the Algerian government to follow-up on these recommendations by November 2008.

Amnesty International has consistently supported the struggle for truth and justice of the relatives of those disappeared in Algeria, and is urging the Algerian government to implement the UN bodies' recommendations without delay.

UPDATE ALGERIA

Sentences for relatives of the disappeared

On 26 March 2008, Louisa Saker, the wife of disappeared teacher Salah Saker (see *Worldwide Appeals*, August 2007), was convicted of participating in an unauthorized march and fined 20,000 dinars (about US\$300) by a court in the city of Constantine. She was acquitted of other charges relating to undermining the authority of public officials, violence and theft.

Boulagheb Rabah and Mehamlia Sofiane, two other relatives of victims of enforced disappearance were convicted in the same case of all four charges detailed above and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. They were not present at the trial. Both men belong to the Association of the Families of the Disappeared in Constantine headed by Louisa Saker. The charges relate to their participation in a peaceful demonstration in 2004 by families of victims of enforced disappearance.

Both the defence and the prosecution have appealed. The appeal hearing should take place in the next session, which begins in September 2008.

Amnesty International believes that Louisa Saker, Boulagheb Rabah and Mehamlia Sofiane are being harassed

for their tireless efforts to uncover the truth about the fate of their disappeared relatives. Salah Saker disappeared following his arrest by the Algerian security forces on 29 May 1994. The Algerian authorities have yet to implement the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee in the *Bousroual and Saker v. Algeria* case, which called for a full, independent and impartial investigation into the enforced disappearance of Salah Saker.

➔ Please continue to write, expressing concern that Louisa Saker and relatives of victims of enforced disappearance were sentenced for participating in a peaceful demonstration and calling for all charges against them to be dropped. Call for Salah Saker's enforced disappearance to be investigated thoroughly, independently and impartially and for those responsible to be brought to justice.
Send appeals to:
Abdelaziz Bouteflika
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
El Mouradia
Alger
Algeria
Fax: +213 21 609618 or +213 21 691595
Email: president@el-mouradia.dz
Salutation: Your Excellency

Good news

GOOD NEWS MOROCCO

Human rights defender Brahim Sabbar released

Sahrawi human rights defender Brahim Sabbar was released on 17 June 2008 after serving two years in prison.

Brahim Sabbar is Secretary General of the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State (Association Sahraouie des Violences des Violations Graves des Droits de l'Homme Commisses par l'Etat du Maroc, ASVDH). He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment after unfair trials in 2006 and 2007, in what Amnesty International considers were politically motivated prosecutions. Amnesty International believes that he was probably imprisoned for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association, and campaigned on his behalf.

Brahim Sabbar was convicted, among various other charges, of "belonging to an unauthorized organization", namely the ASVDH. The ASVDH monitors and documents allegations of human rights violations by the Moroccan authorities and seeks justice for the Sahrawis who were victims of enforced disappearance in previous decades. Brahim Sabbar was himself subjected to enforced disappearance between 1981 and 1991.

Despite poor health and stomach problems which developed during his disappearance



and have been exacerbated by a recent hunger strike, Brahim Sabbar is determined to continue his human rights work. To date, however, the ASVDH has not been able to obtain legal registration.

Brahim Sabbar thanked Amnesty International members for the messages of solidarity he received during his first months of detention.

➔ Please write to Brahim Sabbar, expressing your solidarity with him and your support to ensure that Sahrawi human rights defenders can collect and disseminate information and views on human rights issues without fear of prosecution, harassment or intimidation.
Address:
Brahim Sabbar, Groupe l'ERAC,
Hay Moulay Rachid, N° 96, Laayoune
Morocco. Email: info@asvdh.net

US Supreme Court: Guantánamo detainees can challenge detention



US flag flies over Camp Delta, Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba.

Six and a half years after detentions began in the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, the US Supreme Court ruled that the detainees can challenge their detention in US federal court.

The *Boumediene v. Bush* judgment of 12 June 2008 removes a key obstacle to

ending the lawless environment of isolation, enforced silence, invisibility, and unrestrained executive power in Guantánamo Bay.

The Supreme Court declared as unconstitutional attempts by the US administration and Congress, through the 2006 Military Commissions Act (MCA), to strip the detainees of their right to challenge the lawfulness of their detention (habeas corpus). In the 5-4 opinion, the majority wrote that "the costs of delay can no longer be borne by those who are held in custody. The detainees in these cases are entitled to a prompt habeas corpus hearing."

The Court also rejected as an inadequate substitute the scheme set up to replace habeas corpus: judicial review of decisions of the Combatant Status Review Tribunals and military panels empowered to review each detainee's "enemy combatant" status.

Although he pledged his administration would "abide by the Court's decision",

President Bush "strongly agreed" with the four Justices who dissented from the majority, saying that they had been concerned about national security. Nevertheless, the majority judgment said that "security subsists, too, in fidelity to freedom's first principles, chief among them being freedom from arbitrary and unlawful restraint".

The US government responded to two previous landmark Supreme Court rulings on the Guantánamo detainees in 2004 and 2006 by continuing to block habeas corpus review and eventually eliminating it under the MCA.

Amnesty International, which had submitted a brief in the *Boumediene* case, called on the USA to bring its detention policies and practices into line with international standards. It urged the government to close Guantánamo, abandon military commission trials and either release or charge and try the remaining detainees (about 265) in US federal courts.

Belarus: Article 193-1 must go



Campaigners deliver a giant origami bird to the Ministry of the Interior in Minsk, Belarus, 13 December 2007.

An Amnesty International campaign for freedom of expression in Belarus appears to be making an impact on government policy.

Under Article 193-1 of the Belarusian Criminal Code, civil society organizations and other groups critical of the government may be penalized for their activities. As a result, organizing or participating in any activity by an unregistered non-governmental organization is a criminal offence which carries a prison sentence of up to two years.

Article 193-1 came into effect by presidential decree in December 2005. Since then, dozens of civil society activists and oppositionists, particularly youth activists, have been warned, fined and imprisoned, denying them their rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

Zmitser Dashkevich, a leader of the youth opposition movement, Young Front, was sentenced under Article 193-1 in November 2006 to one and a half years in prison.

Amnesty International campaigned for his immediate and unconditional release, asking individuals from all over the world to send origami birds to the Belarusian Minister of the Interior. As a result, over 11,000 origami cranes were sent, including a giant origami bird, which was hand-delivered to the Minister's office. Zmitser Dashkevich was released early in January 2008.

Origami Action at Amnesty International's 2007 International Council Meeting. Youth delegates at the ICM made a giant origami bird to express support for Zmitser Dashkevich, a youth opposition leader from Belarus imprisoned for expressing his views.



During the campaign, there was a noticeable shift in judgments relating to Article 193-1. Apparently in response to international pressure, the Belarusian authorities ceased passing prison sentences in such cases, opting more frequently to give warnings or impose fines.

However, during 2007 and 2008, significantly more people, particularly members of Young Front, have been fined sums equivalent to US\$500 or more. The average monthly salary in Belarus is equivalent to US\$300.

International pressure must be maintained in order to prevent the Belarusian authorities from using Article 193-1 to harass civil society and youth activists and obstruct them from peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

Amnesty International is calling for the abolition of Article 193-1 which violates both the Belarusian Constitution and international human rights law. Please lobby the Belarusian authorities and follow the campaign at www.amnesty.org. You can also see a short film at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqmbuQuKvC

Kurdish minority in Iran continues to suffer human rights abuses

Kurds in Iran have long suffered deep-rooted discrimination. Their social, political and cultural rights have been repressed, as have their economic aspirations.

Parents are banned from registering their babies with certain Kurdish names. Religious minorities that are mainly or partially Kurdish are targeted by measures designed to stigmatize and isolate them. Kurdish regions have been economically neglected, resulting in entrenched poverty.

The discriminatory *gozinesh* system – a selection procedure that requires prospective state officials and employees to demonstrate allegiance to

Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran – denies Kurds equality in employment and political participation.

Kurdish human rights defenders, community activists and journalists – men and women – face arbitrary arrest and prosecution. Some become prisoners of conscience. Others suffer torture, unfair trials before Revolutionary Courts and the death penalty.

Kurdish women face double discrimination – as women within their communities, and as Kurds by the state. As a result, girls and women suffer daily violence by state officials, members of armed groups and relatives.

State repression of Iran's ethnic

minorities is intensifying. With potentially hostile foreign military forces stationed in neighbouring countries, the authorities have become increasingly wary of minority communities, many of whom, including the Kurds in the west of Iran, are concentrated in border areas.

A new Amnesty International report details the impact of discriminatory practices on Iran's Kurds, and calls on the Iranian authorities to take concrete measures to end the discrimination and associated human rights violations.

See *Iran: human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority* (MDE 13/088/2008)

Nations unite to ban cluster munitions at historic Dublin convention



Cluster munition survivors from Cambodia, Serbia and Ethiopia attending the Convention to Ban Cluster Munition in Dublin, Ireland, 30 May 2008.

On 30 May 2008, 110 states agreed an historic new treaty to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of all cluster munitions.

The treaty was formally adopted at the Dublin Convention on Cluster Munitions following complex and lengthy negotiations. It will be opened for signature in Oslo in December 2008 and becomes legally binding once ratified by 30 states.

The agreement will set new international legal standards on the prohibition of indiscriminate weapons and the protection of civilians during and after armed conflict. Many NATO allies, including the UK, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, are among the signatories. However, the USA, Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Israel refused to join.

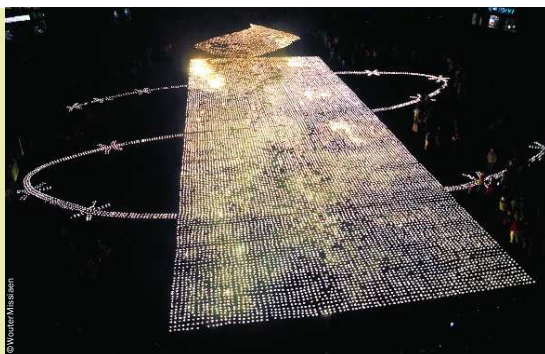
Significantly, the treaty enforces a categorical ban on cluster munitions. No transition period and no exceptions are allowed. It also sets out clear

obligations on humanitarian assistance for victims and affected communities, as well as the responsibility of affected countries and donors to clear contaminated land.

Cluster bombs caused more civilian casualties in Iraq in 2003 and Kosovo in 1999 than any other weapon system. They pose severe risks to civilians both when they are deployed and long after hostilities have ended.

Amnesty International believes the treaty, though not perfect, will enable states to significantly reduce the risks of civilian deaths and injuries in conflict and post-conflict situations. Campaigners and delegates for the Cluster Munitions Coalition must now focus their efforts on ensuring the entry into force of the Convention as quickly as possible.

Snapshot



Amnesty International Belgium's world record candle lighting action, Sint-Truiden Grote Markt, 4 June 2008.

The Amnesty International logo was recreated using 26,105 candles in a candle lit vigil in support of Chinese human rights activists. In doing so they set a world record for the largest outdoor candle display.

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