



IPS, the global news agency, brings you independent news and views on capital punishment. In this newsletter you will find in-depth reports by IPS correspondents from around the world and columns by experts, in addition to special sections for news from international NGOs and a review of the global media for a glimpse of what is happening on the ground. Join us in helping strengthen awareness about the abolition of death penalty – and encourage your friends and colleagues to subscribe to this free monthly newsletter.

Q&A: 'Islam and Abolition Are Compatible'

Interview with Mustapha Bouhandi, professor of comparative religion

CASABLANCA - Many in the Arab world find support for the death penalty in the Quran. But this is a false reading of the texts, says Mustapha Bouhandi, professor of comparative religion at Hassan II university in Casablanca.

[MORE >>](#)

JAPAN: Lone Voices in a Land of Hardening Views

By Suvendrini Kakuchi

TOKYO - For years after his brother was killed in January 1982, Masaharu Harada, 57, says he grappled not only with the trauma of personal loss but also with deep anger and hatred for the perpetrator.

[MORE >>](#)

LATIN AMERICA: Broad Support for UN Moratorium

By Fabiana Frayssinet

RIO DE JANEIRO - Many Latin American governments have not yet adopted a position, or have not communicated one, but the majority trend in the region appears to be to support the resolution for a moratorium on the death penalty proposed by a number of countries to the United Nations General Assembly.

[MORE >>](#)

CENTRAL ASIA: Abolition Close, But Spectre of Death Remains

By Kuban Abdymen

BISHKEK - The hastening end to state executions across Central Asia could turn out to be only a temporary reprieve for many as the new category of 'lifers' face the prospect of decades in jails often plagued with highly-infectious diseases and meagre, unhealthy rations barely sufficient to survive.

[MORE >>](#)

Gov'ts Routinely Dodge U.N. Rights Investigators

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations is disappointed that an increasingly large number of member states are either refusing to respond to charges of extra-judicial killings or have turned down requests for visits by U.N. special envoys mandated to monitor arbitrary and summary executions in these countries.

[MORE >>](#)

CUBA: Sentences Uphold De Facto Moratorium

By Patricia Grogg

HAVANA - Military tribunals that have tried serious cases of murder and kidnapping in the last few weeks in Cuba have opted for life sentences or 30-year prison terms instead of the death penalty, which has not been applied in this country in more than four years.

[MORE >>](#)

Q&A: 'A Key Step Towards Abolition'

Interview with Amnesty International's Martin Macpherson

LONDON - Amnesty International has been fighting since its foundation for the universal abolition of the death penalty. In the next weeks, the UN General Assembly will be voting on a resolution calling for a global moratorium on executions.

[MORE >>](#)

US: Florida Court Struggles through IQ Labyrinth

By Mark Weisenmiller

TAMPA, Florida - A Florida judge's decision to sentence a convicted killer to death, despite two extremely low IQ scores, has highlighted the possibility that some severely mentally retarded may be missing the lifeline thrown out to them by the U.S. Supreme Court five years ago, some activists say.

[MORE >>](#)

U.N. Faults Iraq for Continued Executions

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS - A new United Nations report on human rights criticises the government in Baghdad for its continued executions of prisoners despite appeals by the United Nations and its human rights bodies for a moratorium on capital punishment.

[MORE >>](#)

News from International NGOs:

Amnesty And World Coalition Call For Action - Possible Expansion Of Scope Of Death Penalty In Peru - More Than 7,400 People In Death Row In Pakistan - Indonesia: First Executions Since 2005 - Sharp Rise In Executions In Iraq - The History Of Chinese Law Is An Argument For Abolition - Hands Off Cain To Honour Kagame On Capital Punishment - Radicals Achieve Objective Of Putting Un Moratorium Campaign On Track

WORLD PRESS REVIEW:

Meps Overstep Poland In Campaign Against Death Penalty - Council Of Europe Proclaims Day Against Death Penalty - New South African Party Wants Death Penalty - Rwanda Calls For End To Death Penalty - Overseas Filipino Facing Death Penalty May Be Saved - Why Death Penalty In A Civilised Society? - Beijing Reins In The Death Penalty - Tennessee Governor Says Ruling On Lethal Injection 'Wrong'

Archives in PDF

[Number 1](#) | [Number 2](#) | [Number 3](#) | [Number 4](#) | [Number 5](#) | [Number 6](#) | [Number 7](#) | [Number 8](#) |
[Number 9](#) | [Number 10](#) | [Number 11](#) | [Number 12](#) | [Number 13](#) | [Number 14](#) | [Number 15](#) | [Number 16](#) |
[Number 17](#) | [Number 18](#) | [Number 19](#)

Q&A: 'Islam and Abolition Are Compatible'

Interview with Mustapha Bouhandi, professor of comparative religion

CASABLANCA - Many in the Arab world find support for the death penalty in the Quran. But this is a false reading of the texts, says Mustapha Bouhandi, professor of comparative religion at Hassan II university in Casablanca.

A controversial voice of tolerance, Bouhandi draws fierce criticism from Muslim extremists. Ahead of the U.N. General Assembly vote on a moratorium on executions, he answers questions from IPS correspondent in the region, Abderrahim El Ouali.

IPS: The world is moving towards total abolition of the death penalty. But still the death penalty is in place throughout the Arab world. Is this because of religion or politics?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: In Arab countries the death penalty is retained by regimes which do not want to lose their most important instrument of repression. Most do not derive legitimacy from the ballot box. They believe that any kind of opposition which enjoys popular support is a threat. The death penalty is for them an effective means to eliminate opposition leaders, or at least to intimidate and curb them.

Often these opponents are liquidated without trial, even without that their families ever hearing of their execution or being able to arrange a funeral for them.

Where there are trials, justice in the Arab world does not enjoy a good reputation. It depends on the wishes of the ruling powers. Every death sentence, even in non-political cases, is politically influenced.

So, I would say religion has nothing to do with the application of the death penalty in the Arab world.

IPS: But isn't it a widely held view that to oppose the death penalty is to go against Islam and the Quran?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: Many still believe that the death penalty is closely linked to religion because of the political abuse of religion to justify killings in the past history of Islam.

Today many scholars often use the same arguments and the same religious texts as they did in the past to defend the behaviour of a king, minister or judge who orders killings that are forbidden by God.

There are also those at Friday prayers or lessons, in books and in the markets of the Islamic communities who incite ignorant people and rulers to execute opponents.

I think that a large part of what is attributed to religion regarding the application of the death penalty is not true.

IPS: What religious arguments would you give to those who say 'to abolish the death penalty would be to go against God's law'?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: God's law, Shariah, is expressed in the basic commandments found in all monotheistic religions. The main

commandment is not to kill. The death penalty is a punishment hindering killings by the fear of being killed. But if a killing is prevented without recourse to a killing, then God's law not to kill is, indeed, being followed.

IPS: But don't most Muslim religious scholars agree that there are four cases where the death penalty applies, even though in some countries the number rises to 865?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: Let me disagree with you that in Islam there are four cases for the death penalty. This is wrongly attributed to Islam and I could give you very detailed proof.

As I have said, in most cases we have states seeking legitimacy in their interpretation of our Islamic religious heritage. These are states that lack popular, democratic support. I think that it is time to denounce this exploitation of religion by the usurpers of power in the Muslim world. The death penalty could be easily abolished by a re-reading the very texts used by the death penalty advocates.

IPS: We've seen in Morocco the beginning of a debate on the death penalty. Is this what is essential for there ever to be the abolition of the death penalty in Arab countries?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: Yes, we need real debate on this subject. We need to distinguish between the death penalty, which has no basis in religion or reason and is largely a pretext for oppression in Arab and Islamic countries, and the death penalty as a deterrent. We need a debate about the deterrence alternatives.

IPS: There is a currently a death penalty moratorium in Morocco. Should activists first set their sights on extending this regionally?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: I really do not think that this penalty can be abolished at this time in light of the current organised international crime now being conducted against the Arab and Muslim community. We are witnessing the barbaric behaviour of many powers employing the latest in sophisticated arms, aircraft and missiles to implement the ultimate punishment against entire populations of villages, towns and tents. Those who wish to abolish the death penalty from their criminal codes should first address the international powers causing most of this existing violence on earth.

I also believe that we cannot talk about the abolition of the death penalty in light of a global culture that is invading homes all over the world with films of violence, war and murder. This is a culture holding as supreme the reaching of solutions by destructive military force. This criminal culture is devastating our values of compassion, nobility and humanity. Without a restoration of these values, we cannot hope to convince people to support death penalty abolition.

IPS: But did we not see a revulsion throughout the Muslim world over the recent execution, particularly the manner of the execution, of Saddam Hussain. Would this not suggest that many people in the Arab world would support a regional moratorium?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: I think there was this expression of anger because the execution was seen as an insult to the Arab and Islamic world. Still, in the Arab and Islamic world, just as in the western world, we do not respect the value of human life, quite

separately from religious, sectarian, and political considerations which are dividing the world into groups fighting against each other. When human life becomes a real value in itself regardless of ethnicity, then we can talk about the suspending or abolishing the death penalty.

IPS: But still recently there has been much talk that Morocco might be the first Arab country to abolish the death penalty. If this happened, might this not have a snowball effect throughout the Arab world?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: Arab countries have always influenced each other in keeping in step with international trends. Whether Morocco will be the first to abolish the death penalty or some other Arab country, I really do believe that eventually there will be global abolition of this punishment. But, as I have said, there are some global cultures moving in an opposite direction to this, slowing down the realisation of this goal. People should understand the extent of these international influences on the domestic scene and work to bring about a reforming influence.

IPS: What alternative punishments does Islam envisage for the gravest of all crimes?

MUSTAPHA BOUHANDI: The alternative punishments are imprisonment, repentance to the relatives of the victim and reform acceptable to the community.

The Qur'an says: "The penalty for those fighting against God and His Messenger is that they would be killed or crucified, or their hands and legs cut off, or exiled."

Scholars have talked too much about this verse. Some have interpreted it as meaning that those who have killed should be killed, those who have amputated should be amputated, and those who have just helped criminals should be exiled. Other scholars have stated that all the best-suited punishment options are open to an authority.

I believe the punishment options are linked to cultural, social norms and legal rules. The verse does not sanction the death penalty, or amputation. There are other punishments that are best suited, especially if these provide deterrence on one hand and mitigation and mercy on the other. (END/2007)

DEATH PENALTY-JAPAN: Lone Voices in a Land of Hardening Views By Suvendrini Kakuchi

TOKYO - For years after his brother was killed in January 1982, Masaharu Harada, 57, says he grappled not only with the trauma of personal loss but also with deep anger and hatred for the perpetrator.

Then the opportunity came to express his feelings. "I decided to visit the murderer in prison to yell at him, telling him how much I hated him. But when confronted with his anguished apologies, I felt my anger change to inexplicable sadness for him. Suddenly, at that moment, I was filled with a sense of relief," Harada told IPS.

That powerful, enduring change in his feelings is what Harada is now trying hard to convey to the Japanese public. Anti-death penalty activists welcome the move. They hope he will help soften what they see as hardening support for the death penalty in a country shocked by recent gruesome killings.

Harada is now a firm abolitionist. Not only did that fateful prison visit in August 1993 change his mind about capital punishment, but his experience afterwards strengthened his conviction. The convicted killer, Toshihiko Hasegawa, 51, who became a Christian before he was hanged in 2001, wrote to him telling of the cruelty he endured on death row.

"I learned from Hasegawa how for months he waited out his hanging in isolation. His family was barred from visiting him. My requests for more meetings were turned down. Such treatment is inhuman and does not make me feel better," he said.

Harada, who lives alone in Aichi Prefecture in central Japan, launched this June the Japan chapter of Ocean, an organisation based in the U.S. that works to bring together crime victims and the perpetrators in the hope both can move "beyond the feelings of hatred".

"The kind of work done by Ocean is badly needed in Japan where meetings between bereaved family members and the criminals are rare. We believe face-to-face meetings will bring transparency to Japan's secretive death penalty system," Misako Yagishita, heading Amnesty Japan's anti-death penalty campaign, said.

Activists who have spoken to family members of hanged prisoners have compiled a chilling picture of Japan's death row. Some of the inmates are left languishing for decades on death row before being hanged. Executions are carried out secretly. There is no prior warning of the day of execution. Inmates are told they will be executed only hours before. Embarrassed relatives rarely collect the bodies.

Harada said he supported such a system until his own experience, believing in the traditional Japanese view that criminals should be ostracised from society.

Another voice calling for a change of attitudes towards convicted killers is Dr Masami Hirayama, a mental health specialist. He has long campaigned for better rights for the mentally ill, accusing the government of failing to provide psychological treatment for death row inmates. This is tantamount to denying them a fair trial.

"There is obviously a huge need out there for criminals who have committed murder because of their mental health problems. Handing down death sentences on these people without giving them proper medical treatment is wrong," he told IPS.

But more emotional support was needed for both sides of crime -- the relatives of the victims, as well as the convicted, he said.

Hirayama runs a non-profit organisation, Grief Care Support, providing counselling and advice for such people. Lack of similar such schemes in Japan was an indication of the ignorance of the rights of people with mental problems, he said.

Many other psychiatrists would agree.

As a clear example of a criminal with a mental disorder, they name Shoko Asahara, the cult leader sentenced to death by hanging in 2004 for masterminding the Tokyo underground attack. The deadly sarin nerve gas the cult released on subway in 1995 killed 12 commuters and injured thousands.

Asahara's defence team have often raised the question of his mental health. They appealed his death sentence on the grounds that he was mentally ill. But in August last year, a court-appointed psychiatrist who examined Asahara found he could be feigning mental illness and was fit to stand trial.

Asahara's appeal against his death sentence was turned down by the Japanese Supreme Court in September 2006. Several other cult leaders have also been sentenced to death.

Anti-death penalty activists believe the case is the biggest single barrier to the abolition of the death penalty in Japan. A 2005 survey of public opinion showed that support for the death penalty has been rising steadily. For the first time it topped 80 percent -- a rise of 23 percent since 1975.

Since then, abolition activists have noted growing public sympathy for Hiroshi Motomura, 31, a family victim of a capital crime, campaigning for the death sentence. Motomura's wife was raped and she and her daughter killed in 1999.

In May, the Japanese Supreme Court ordered the life sentence for the convicted killer in the case to be reviewed by the Hiroshima High Court, instructing it to take into consideration the death penalty.

Activists are watching with concern the workings of a new law that will allow crime victims to testify in court against defendants. Many lawyers believe that that the emotional testimony could work against the defendants in capital cases and lead to more death sentences. The law was approved by the Japanese Diet in June.

The appointment of Japan's new justice minister, Kunio Hatoyama is a reflection of the current pro-death penalty trend in Japan, some activists say. Hatoyama, a hawkish, open supporter of the death penalty, has promised a safer society and a crackdown on crime.

There are currently 103 prisoners on death row, according to Amnesty Japan. In April there were three hangings, followed by three more this August.

Japan and the U.S. are the only two major industrialised countries still retaining the death penalty. (END/2007)

DEATH PENALTY-LATIN AMERICA: Broad Support for UN Moratorium By Fabiana Frayssinet*

RIO DE JANEIRO - Many Latin American governments have not yet adopted a position, or have not communicated one, but the majority trend in the region appears to be to support the resolution for a moratorium on the death penalty proposed by a number of countries to the United Nations General Assembly.

The motion in favour of a global suspension of executions, which Amnesty International describes as only one step away from outright abolition of capital punishment, will be supported by Brazil, according to a Foreign Ministry statement received by IPS.

The communiqué says that Brazil's position at the U.N. General Assembly will be "above all to abolish the death penalty," as this country itself did in 1979. At present the maximum prison sentence in Brazil is 30 years.

Complete abolition of capital punishment is among the human rights goals Brazil proposed to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Foreign Ministry said.

But if this goal is not achieved, "Brazil will support the moratorium," and if this is not agreed either, Brazil "will keep a watching brief to ensure that application of the death penalty follows international standards, that is, international human rights law," said the statement from the centre-left government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Perly Cipriano, deputy secretary for the defence of human rights at the Special Secretariat on Human Rights of the Presidency of Brazil, told IPS that this is indeed Brazil's strategy, and pointed out that the country has historically maintained this stance at international forums.

However, Cipriano stressed that although the death penalty had been officially abolished in Brazil, "hundreds of political prisoners were killed during the dictatorship (1964-1985) in military and police establishments, and those deaths were not officially recognised."

He said that only recently had the Lula administration published the book "Direito à Memória e à Verdade" (The Right to Memory and Truth), in which for the first time the state accepts responsibility for those deaths.

Argentina, where capital punishment was abolished for common crimes in 1984, appears to be following Brazil's lead as regards the moratorium, proposed for consideration at the 62nd U.N. General Assembly, which opened on Sept. 18, with general debate beginning Tuesday.

A source at the Argentine Foreign Ministry's office on human rights told IPS that the resolution for a moratorium, sponsored by a number of countries including leading EU countries, has not yet been sent to the Néstor Kirchner administration, but added that Argentina "is totally prepared to support it."

In Venezuela, where capital punishment was abolished by the constitution for all crimes in 1863, no official position for the U.N. General Assembly has yet been taken. However, sources consulted by IPS said the government is leaning towards voting in favour of the international moratorium on executions.

Caracas is also likely to give its support to Mexico City, which formally abolished the last vestiges of the death penalty in the armed forces in 2005. In practice, though, no one has been executed in Mexico since 1961.

Sources at the Mexican Foreign Ministry told IPS that the question has not yet been defined, but said at the same time that the administration of Felipe Calderón "is completely against the death penalty."

The most likely outcome is that Mexico will support the proposal. At the second summit between Mexico and the EU, held in Guadalajara, Mexico in May 2004, the parties signed an agreement, article 7 of which declared "a firm mutual commitment" to the universal abolition of capital punishment.

Calderón belongs to the conservative National Action Party (PAN), which is against capital punishment. The Mexican Supreme Court

will not extradite any person to a country where they might face the risk of being sentenced to death.

However, in Peru, President Alan García has other ideas. He wants to bring back the death penalty and has introduced a draft law to that effect in Congress, where it has not yet been debated.

Activists therefore take the view that Peru will oppose the moratorium. "If the governing party lawmakers are in favour of the death penalty, Peru will vote against the moratorium at the U.N.," the president of the local chapter of Amnesty International, Ismael Vega Díaz, told IPS.

Cuba and Guatemala are the only countries in Latin America that retain the death penalty for ordinary crimes. It has been abolished even for the military courts by Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela.

But this is not the case in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador and Peru, where the death penalty is retained for exceptional circumstances, under the Military Code and for certain crimes in wartime.

The generalised opposition to capital punishment by governments in the region does not, however, keep the issue from cropping up again during periods of increased public insecurity, when certain sectors begin to advocate reinstatement.

This happened in Argentina in the 1990s, when amid a wave of violent robberies and kidnappings, then President Carlos Menem (1989-1999) suggested reinstating the death penalty for cases of kidnapping in which the hostages were subsequently murdered.

However, human rights organisations mobilised against the initiative and it did not prosper.

In Brazil, too, the debate has been reactivated by the increasing sense of urban insecurity. Eloisa Machado and Daniela Ikawa, of the Sao Paulo-based Conectas Human Rights, told IPS that "the view that social problems will be solved by stiffer sentences is widespread."

But that just appears to be "an easy way out, whereas it's completely inefficient as a solution for the problems that deeply afflict a large part of Brazilian society, such as poverty, unemployment, poor quality education, inadequate housing and the lack of human security," for which structural solutions are needed, the human rights lawyers said.

In Mexico, in spite of the government's stance against the death penalty, debate is stirring again, although without any changes in practice.

According to a February opinion poll by AP-Ipsos in Mexico, 71 percent of respondents were in favour of the death penalty and 26 percent were against. However, when the question was put differently and interviewees were asked to select a penalty for a person found guilty of murder, only 46 percent chose capital punishment.

Meanwhile, Peru may join Cuba and Guatemala if the García administration's draft law, reintroducing the death penalty for rapists of children under seven who kill their victims, is passed.

The initiative will be debated again in the Constitutional Commission, the commission chairman Javier Velásquez Quesquén told IPS, because "conditions are now more favourable" for its approval.

Velásquez Quesquén pointed out that this was an electoral promise of García's, as "the country wants tougher sentences for sex offenders."

Amnesty's Vega Díaz said he was concerned by the announcement. "When the International Day Against the Death Penalty is coming up (on Oct. 10), it's very bad news that the governing party is insisting on its bill" to reinstate it, he said.

In Guatemala the death penalty is on the books, but there have been no executions since 2000 because of a legal vacuum which prevents condemned prisoners from asking for a presidential pardon, and exhausting all legal means of defence.

During the administration of Alfonso Portillo (2000-2004), Congress repealed the 1892 Pardons Law. Since then the country has lacked procedures for convicts to exercise their right to apply for a pardon, an amnesty or a commuted sentence.

In order to overcome the impasse that has been keeping 21 death row inmates in limbo, the rightwing Unionist Party (PU) submitted a draft law to Congress in 2006 that would restore the procedure for applying for a presidential pardon.

* With additional reporting by Marcela Valente (Argentina), Diego Cevallos (Mexico), Ángel Páez (Peru) and Humberto Márquez (Venezuela). (END/2007)

CENTRAL ASIA: Abolition Close, But Spectre of Death Remains By Kuban Abdymen

BISHKEK - The hastening end to state executions across Central Asia could turn out to be only a temporary reprieve for many as the new category of 'lifers' face the prospect of decades in jails often plagued with highly-infectious diseases and meagre, unhealthy rations barely sufficient to survive.

All five Central Asian states -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan -- inherited capital punishment from Soviet times. Since independence in 1991, they have moved with varying degrees of speed towards the abolition.

"In Central Asia, there has been a clear move towards abolition. It's been step by step process. The states all retained the death penalty when they gained independence in 1991," Gulnara Kaliakbarova, Penal Reform International's regional director for Central Asia, based in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan, told IPS. "But now in reality the death penalty has been abolished in four of these countries."

Turkmenistan was the first state to abolish the death penalty in 1999. Then followed Kyrgyzstan last year, finally completing the process in June when capital punishment was removed from its criminal code.

Kazakhstan put in place a moratorium in 2003 and Tajikistan in 2004. In May, Kazakhstan all but abolished the death penalty with constitutional amendments banning any taking of life. The sole exceptions to this were for terrorist killings and for "the most serious crimes in times of war".

"Uzbekistan has not yet introduced a moratorium but it is also taking steps towards abolition," Gulnara Kaliakbarova said. "In August

2005, President Islam Karimov signed a decree stipulating the death penalty would be abolished on Jan. 1, 2008. In June this year, the Uzbekistan senate passed amendments to the criminal code replacing the death penalty with life imprisonment."

But the steady progress towards the abolition of the death penalty had not been matched by a modernisation of prisons and adoption of progressive penal policies for the most serious offenders to prepare them for eventual successful release back into the community.

Only in oil-rich Kazakhstan, had there been a big increase in spending on prisons, according to Penal Reform International. "Over the past three to four years, the Kazakhstan prison budget has approximately tripled," Gulnara Kaliakbarova said. "Spending on each inmate is currently 2,000 dollars a year. This means prisoner living conditions and their nutrition needs are adequate."

But elsewhere in Central Asia, there was an urgent need to "to provide minimal international standards of treatment for prisoners", said Gulnara Kaliakbarova, whose staff monitor and advise on penal policies across the enormous region.

The worst prison conditions may well be in Tajikistan, the smallest and poorest of all the central Asian states, Gulnara Kaliakbarova suggested. A five-year-long devastating civil war in the 1990s had thrown the country back economically. "Official figures indicate that 86 percent of the seven million population live below the poverty line," she said.

Tuberculosis, AIDS, gastro-intestinal and other infectious diseases were "acute" problems in the Tajikistan jails. Overcrowding, malnutrition and inadequate hygiene and medical facilities increased the vulnerability of inmates, she said, adding that there were no state funds to finance the collection of reliable statistics.

"The political will to change the system is there, but the prison authorities lack the expertise and resources for professional training and re-training. There is also a high level of corruption in the system," she said.

In Kyrgyzstan, a neighbouring republic to the south, prisons were also death traps with rampant tuberculosis, particularly in the two underground jails where most of the long-term lifers were held, Akin Toktaliev, chairman of the rights organisation, Committee for the Protection of the Dignity and Honour of the Kyrgyz nation, told IPS in the capital Bishkek.

Adequate medical care for those who fall sick in prison, particularly for treatment of highly-contagious tuberculosis was lacking, Toktaliev said, adding: "Instead of keeping them in such unacceptable conditions, it would be more humane if they were sent to death."

"Some are held in narrow, dark underground cells without access to fresh air. The average space allotted to the long-term prisoners is 2.5 square metres. They virtually never leave their cells," Gulnara Kaliakbarova confirmed, describing conditions generally throughout the Kyrgyz prison system as "inhumane".

Primitive sanitary conditions, foul-smelling cesspits and insufficient water were problems throughout its prison system, Gulnara Kaliakbarova said.

"Prisoners have noticed some improvement in the quality of the meals.

But their variety and nutritional level is still below standard, except in the case of bread rations. Meat and fish are served in a concentrated form. Potatoes and other vegetables are inadequate. The daily menu is porridge for breakfast, steamed cabbage, macaroni or borsch for lunch and a supper of a soup."

Relatives were allowed to supplement prison rations by bringing in sacks of potatoes, fruit and vegetables during their once-monthly visits, Nargiza Akyl of the Kyrgyz Ombudsman Office told IPS.

Despite the abolition of the death penalty and more openness about the prison conditions, Kyrgyz prison authorities were still refusing to tell relatives where the bodies of those executed in the past had been buried, Gulnara Kaliakbarova said.

Penal Reform International has no information about the penal systems in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, two neighbouring, resource-rich countries in the region.

Ironically, secretive Turkmenistan was the first country in Central Asia to abolish the death penalty under its despotic leader Saparmurat Niyazov, who died suddenly last December. He was succeeded by the former deputy prime minister Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedow.

But in Uzbekistan prison conditions were described as "unsatisfactory" by Surat Ikramov, chairperson of the Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Activists of Uzbekistan, told IPS.

About 40 percent of the 70,000 Uzbekistan prison inmates had been unjustly charged, he said. "Many are tortured, especially religious believers who number 7, 000," he said. Relatives were only allowed to visit four times a year.

The official information blackout on the death penalty inmates was total. "Nobody will say how many people have been sentenced to death." He did not know the date of the last execution or the name of the person. "Officials never publish any figures on this issue."

Ikramov estimated there were currently about 120 people on death row. But Penal Reform International sources suggest the number could be as high as 1,000. Penal Reform International is now calling on countries in the region to take the final remaining steps for it to become absolutely "death-penalty-free". It also has a detailed list of recommendations to improve prison life for lifers and their families.

"Life imprisonment should now be orientated towards re-socialisation and re-integration into the community," Gulnara Kaliakbarova said. "Now with the abolition of the death penalty, the time has come to adopt the most humane alternative punishment strategies." (END/2007)

POLITICS: Gov'ts Routinely Dodge U.N. Rights Investigators **By Thalif Deen**

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations is disappointed that an increasingly large number of member states are either refusing to respond to charges of extra-judicial killings or have turned down requests for visits by U.N. special envoys mandated to monitor arbitrary and summary executions in these countries.

The 27 states that have so far failed to agree to visits range from Security Council members, such as China, Russia and the United States, to countries like El Salvador, Kenya, Thailand, Israel, Uzbekistan and Venezuela.

"The fact that 90 percent of countries identified as warranting a country visit have failed to cooperate with the system -- and that the (Human Rights) Council has done nothing in response -- is a major indictment of the system," said Philip Alston, the U.N. special rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

"No matter how grave the issue and how blatant or compromised the conduct of the relevant government," the Geneva-based Human Rights Council "remains entirely unmoved," Alston said in a 21-page report to the 62nd session of the General Assembly, which opened last week and concludes in December.

He also points out that he has "long sought" to draw attention to the violations of the right to life committed by the government of Iran "as a result of its executions of juveniles and of persons accused of crimes which cannot be considered to be among the most serious."

"Such executions," he noted, "have recently gathered pace and the silence of the international community can only bring discredit."

Alston said that Iran had issued a "standing invitation" but has repeatedly failed to respond to requests for specific dates for a visit -- "despite several meetings and an extensive correspondence."

The only countries that have facilitated visits during the past year are Guatemala, Lebanon and the Philippines. Brazil, the Central African Republic and Yemen have issued invitations but visits are still pending.

An agreed visit to Guinea was aborted in March 2007 and the government subsequently failed to agree to a series of requests to re-schedule the mission.

Meanwhile, six members of the Human Rights Council -- Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia -- have failed to issue requested invitations, according to the report. The remaining states with outstanding requests include Laos, Nepal, Singapore, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and Vietnam.

Their responses "have ranged from complete silence, through formal acknowledgement, acceptance in principle but without meaningful follow-up, to outright rejection."

On the practice of so-called "targeted assassinations", Alston said he has addressed allegations of such killings to both Israel and the United States, as well as to countries on whose territories such killings have taken place.

"The largest challenge has been the lack of cooperation these countries have shown. Israel has not addressed the substance of allegations, and the United States has insisted that the whole issue falls outside the mandate" of the special rapporteur, he added.

Tania Baldwin-Pask, adviser on International Organisations, International Law, and Organisations Programme at the London-based Amnesty International (AI), says this is a "chronic problem" for all U.N. human rights investigators.

"AI has consistently raised (this issue) because it is so fundamental to the functioning of the system that all member states cooperate with

the special procedures. It goes to the heart of universality and non-selectivity, which so many states are keen to stress in other contexts," she told IPS.

She also pointed out that the issue of non-cooperation, whether framed in terms of mission requests or in terms of responding to correspondence, regularly features in many of the reports of the U.N. special rapporteurs.

Alston, she pointed out, has been the most persistent in seeking to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly to this issue.

Regrettably, Baldwin-Pask said, the unwillingness of states to facilitate visit requests is quite common, although they have different ways in which they approach this.

She said few take the approach of Singapore (and as highlighted in the report) whereby they flatly refuse a mission request. Many take a considerable amount of time to "discuss with their capitals" and put in place the necessary arrangements for the visit to go ahead.

But because the Human Rights Council has no mechanism at this time to check -- state by state -- the status of mission requests, it is easy for states to simply ignore these requests.

Consequently, she said, you have states such as Turkmenistan which has never received a visit by human rights monitors, despite 11 different mandate-holders over the course of the past few years seeking to go on mission there.

And the Council, she complained, "as yet not taking action in response".

It's not only the number of visit requests either -- the special rapporteur on torture, for example, has been seeking a mission to India since 1993. So, it can also be a question of time.

Citing another example, she said, it's not only the thematic mandate-holders who struggle to gain access, even country rapporteurs can find themselves unable to visit as well. The special rapporteur on North Korea has never been able to visit that country.

Some member states like to use the opportunity of the Council or the General Assembly to announce that they have invited a particular U.N. rapporteur to visit, which on the face of it looks as if they are willing to cooperate with the special rapporteurs, or even the Council itself -- only to postpone the mission, she added. Of course, states rarely make a public announcement about the postponement.

Zimbabwe, which has never allowed visits by U.N. human rights envoys, announced at a Council meeting that it would be hosting a visit by the special rapporteur on violence against women. But then it has now postponed that visit and there is no indication of when it might take place.

According to Amnesty International, Russia is one example of a state which had originally agreed to a visit by the special rapporteur on torture last October, but postponed it at the last minute apparently because visits to detention facilities would contravene national law, particularly with respect to carrying out unannounced visits and holding private interviews with detainees.

The United States has blocked a visit to its detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, because it would not allow the rapporteurs to hold private interviews with detainees, Baldwin-Pask told IPS.

"The other point to note as well is that lack of cooperation in facilitating visits is one facet of a larger problem -- states should also implement the recommendations arising from such visits."

"All too often you see that states are willing to host the visit but then take no action to follow up on the recommendations," said Baldwin-Pask. (END/2007)

DEATH PENALTY-CUBA: Sentences Uphold De Facto Moratorium

By Patricia Grogg

HAVANA - Military tribunals that have tried serious cases of murder and kidnapping in the last few weeks in Cuba have opted for life sentences or 30-year prison terms instead of the death penalty, which has not been applied in this country in more than four years.

The de facto moratorium has placed Cuba in a more flexible position with regard to the controversial issue, expected to be on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly's 62nd session, which opened Tuesday.

The London-based global rights watchdog Amnesty International reported that the European Union Council of Ministers decided in June to present a resolution seeking an international moratorium on the death penalty, a step towards the abolition of capital punishment worldwide.

"The de facto moratorium is good news," Elizardo Sánchez, an activist with the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN), told IPS.

The CCDHRN regularly reports on human rights in Cuba, particularly political prisoners and the death penalty, based largely on testimony and information provided by the family members of prisoners.

A report by the dissident group noted Wednesday that the trial of young recruits who deserted from the army last April and tried to hijack a plane to go to the United States led to two life sentences and three sentences of 30, 25 and 15 years.

The CCDHRN reported that the sentences were handed down last week, although the trial took place Aug. 24-26.

According to the report, the Western Military Tribunal in Havana gave life sentences to Sergeants Yoán Torres, 21, and Leandro Cerezo, 20, while sentencing 19-year-old Sergeant Karel de Miranda to 30 years, 25-year-old Corporal Alain Forbes to 25 years, and civilian Ridel Lescaylle, 31, to 15 years.

In a statement distributed to foreign correspondents, Sánchez said the CCDHRN sees it as positive that Torres, the only one of the recruits who is 21 years old (the minimum age for the death penalty), was not sentenced to die by firing squad.

The dissident group's report, which did not specify the charges of which the five defendants were found guilty, stated that they were "convicted for the events that culminated in a bloody, frustrated

attempt to hijack a commercial passenger plane at the Havana airport."

An Interior Ministry statement issued on May 3 indicated that three armed conscripts doing their two years' military service had deserted from their army unit on Apr. 29, killing another conscript on guard duty, Yoendris Gutiérrez, and wounding an unnamed soldier in the process.

The photos and full names of Torres, Forbus and Cerezo were later circulated by the police.

One of the three deserters was arrested and "revealed that their aim was to leave the country illegally." The other two hijacked a public city bus, with several passengers on board, and sped to the domestic flights terminal of the José Martí International Airport, the Interior Ministry added.

At the airport, "the murderers killed with four shots one of the hostages, Lieutenant Colonel Víctor Ibo Acuña Velázquez of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, who despite being unarmed, tried to prevent the terrorist action," said the communiqué, which did not mention the participation of a civilian.

In an earlier trial, held in June in Santiago de Cuba, 847 km east of Havana, another military tribunal handed down a life sentence to a recruit and an inmate, as well as 30-year sentences to two other recruits, said Sánchez, who explained that he was informed of the case by family members of the accused.

The sentenced soldiers, who were working as prison guards, had staged a revolt on Dec. 20 at the El Manguito prison near Santiago, and two military officers were killed in the process. Official reports on the incident are unavailable, said Sánchez.

In his opinion, the recruits were "technically" eligible for the death penalty in both cases, and the sentences they received show that "the de facto moratorium" in place since early 2003 is still in effect.

In April 2003, 11 armed individuals seized a ferry with dozens of passengers on board, with the aim of defecting to the United States. In a summary trial, three of the defendants, identified as the ringleaders, were sentenced to death, and were immediately executed by firing squad.

The incident was part of a spate of hijackings of boats and planes by people attempting to defect to the United States. The Cuban government accused the U.S. of hatching a "sinister plan (to cause) provocation."

The government defends the death penalty as a judicial weapon that can be used to defend the country from external attack and potential internal activities aimed at destroying the state. It is also maintained to protect the population from the most heinous crimes.

"The possible abolition of capital punishment in Cuba would be linked to a cease in the policy of hostility, terrorism and economic, commercial and financial warfare to which its people have been subjected for over 40 years by the United States," the Cuban Foreign Ministry said in a message to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2004.

The current General Assembly session will also vote for the 16th time on a Cuban resolution against the U.S. embargo of Cuba, which

according to the Cuban government has caused 89 billion dollars in direct damages to the island since 1962.

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque announced Tuesday that during the General Assembly session, he would hold "exploratory talks" with the European Union troika, representing the past, present and future EU presidencies.

It is not known, however, whether the EU initiative against capital punishment will be included on the list of issues to be discussed.

In Cuba, the death penalty is applicable to a number of crimes if aggravating factors are present, although it cannot be applied in the case of people under 21 or to women who were pregnant at the time the crime was committed or when the sentence is handed down.

In practice, the death sentence has never been applied against a woman since the Jan. 1, 1959 triumph of the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro.

According to Amnesty International, the United States is the only country in the Americas to carry out the death penalty since 2003. And only six countries -- Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Pakistan, the United States and China -- were responsible for 91 percent of all executions carried out in 2006. (END/2007)

Q&A: 'A Key Step Towards Abolition' Interview with Amnesty International's Martin Macpherson

LONDON - Amnesty International has been fighting since its foundation for the universal abolition of the death penalty. In the next weeks, the UN General Assembly will be voting on a resolution calling for a global moratorium on executions.

Directing Amnesty's campaign for the moratorium is Martin Macpherson. How close are we to an end to all state killings? Macpherson makes no predictions to Julio Godoy, European correspondent of IPS. But the UN vote will be an historic milestone in the campaign to end capital punishment.

IPS: Why does Amnesty International want the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution calling for abolition of the death penalty?

Martin Macpherson: Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and without exception, believing it to be a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The death penalty legitimises an irreversible act of violence by the state and will inevitably claim innocent victims. Amnesty therefore demands unconditional and worldwide abolition of the death penalty.

A resolution by the UN General Assembly -- a universal body representing the entire UN membership -- calling for a moratorium on executions as a step towards abolition would be an important international milestone in the campaign to abolish the death penalty worldwide.

IPS: Why is there a push for this resolution on the death penalty just now?

Martin Macpherson: A death-penalty-free-world is increasingly becoming a real possibility. But to achieve that goal there must be strong political leadership and a well-crafted strategy to create global support.

This past year has seen renewed debate on the use of the death penalty prompted in part by the execution of Saddam Hussein. A time has been reached when it should be possible to adopt a resolution in the UN General Assembly calling for a moratorium on executions.

One-hundred-and-thirty-one countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Only 25 countries actually carried out executions in 2006. In 2006, 91 percent of all known executions took place in China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the U.S. Amnesty International's statistics also show an overall decline in the number of executions in 2006 -- a recorded 1,591 executions, compared to 2,148 in 2005. These figures demonstrate that there is now a real momentum to end capital punishment.

Statements by both the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour have supported the "trend in international law and in national practice towards a phasing out of the death penalty".

IPS: Has the General Assembly ever taken a position on the death penalty?

Martin Macpherson: To date, the UN General Assembly has not adopted a resolution either calling for a moratorium on executions or abolition of the death penalty. It has adopted standards to limit the application of the death penalty and safeguards to protect the rights of those facing the death penalty.

One of these standards is the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Sixty-one states have now ratified this Protocol and a further eight are signatures to it. Amnesty International believes the UN General Assembly should now call for a global moratorium on executions as a key step towards the ultimate goal of abolition.

IPS: Calls for a UN General Assembly resolution on the death penalty failed in the past. Why should the efforts be successful this time?

Martin Macpherson: Yes, there were unsuccessful attempts in 1994 and 1999. But since then the number of abolitionist states in law or practice has increased. At the UN General Assembly in 2006, Finland, as the President of the EU, delivered a statement supported by 95 states which expressed "deep concern at the continuing use of the death penalty around the world". The statement went on to call on states that still maintain the death penalty to abolish it completely and, in the meantime, to establish a moratorium on executions.

The international trend is towards abolition. But fierce opposition can be expected now from some states that retain the death penalty who will seek to defeat the resolution on the grounds that this is not a human rights issue that affects the right to life but a question that solely falls within the domestic jurisdiction of states. They will attempt to defeat the resolution, for example, by introducing "wrecking amendments" as happened in the past.

IPS: What is a "wrecking amendment"?

Martin Macpherson: "Wrecking amendments", sometimes called "killer amendments", seek to undermine the purpose of the resolution. They are neither friendly nor made in good faith. "Wrecking amendments" in the past have sought to undermine the draft by denying that the question of the death penalty resolution is a human rights issue of concern to the world community and by introducing language which reaffirms the sovereignty of states to decide on issues of criminal justice and sentencing.

IPS: Surely, though, it is for each UN member state to decide for itself whether it uses the sanction of capital punishment?

Martin Macpherson: The promotion and protection of human rights is a concern for the international community as a whole. It is not solely a matter for individual states. Amnesty International has declared its total and unconditional opposition to the death penalty, and consequently the organisation does not accept that states have a right to execute people in any situation. Even the best judicial systems are fallible, and innocent people will invariably be put to death. There is no perfect judicial system.

IPS: Your critics may say this is just another instance of rich countries and their non-governmental organisations seeking to impose their values on developing countries. How would you reply to this?

Martin Macpherson: Opposition to the death penalty is not exclusive to any particular region, political system, world religion, culture or tradition. States that have abolished the death penalty are to be found in all regions and cut across religious divides. Furthermore, international human rights law and standards on the death penalty has been elaborated by international and regional bodies, including the UN General Assembly and the development of those standards draws on many different experiences and legal systems.

The current initiative to table a resolution on moratorium on executions at the UN General Assembly is supported by states from all regions of the world.

IPS: The next UN General Assembly -- the 62nd -- opens in the last week of September. We can expect, then, that the moratorium initiative will be introduced into the new Assembly for a vote in the coming weeks. What will it take for it to be successful?

Martin Macpherson: It must build a strong, broad cross-regional support and be carefully prepared in order to secure a successful outcome. A number of the states that are opposed to such a resolution are influential and determined to defeat or distort it with wrecking amendments. With strong political leadership and a well thought out strategy it will be possible to achieve a resolution on a universal moratorium.

IPS: Will the resolution you are expecting make any difference to states which are now executing people?

Martin Macpherson: A UN General Assembly resolution by itself will not prevent a state carrying out an execution as such resolutions are not legally binding. However, a clear call from the UN's highest political body for a moratorium on executions would carry considerable moral and political weight. It would be a very valuable tool in convincing reluctant states to implement a moratorium as a significant step towards worldwide abolition. For us at Amnesty, it would be an

important advocacy tool in the campaign for worldwide death penalty abolition. (END/2007)

DEATH PENALTY-US: Florida Court Struggles through IQ Labyrinth

By Mark Weisenmiller

TAMPA, Florida - A Florida judge's decision to sentence a convicted killer to death, despite two extremely low IQ scores, has highlighted the possibility that some severely mentally retarded may be missing the lifeline thrown out to them by the U.S. Supreme Court five years ago, some activists say.

On Aug. 24, John Couey, 49, was sentenced to death for the kidnapping, rape and murder of nine-year-old Jessica Lunsford in February 2005. Before the sentencing, Couey's lawyers argued that because Couey scored 64 on an IQ test he was mentally retarded. This meant he should be spared death by lethal injection and given a life sentence.

Under Florida law, the legal definition of mental retardation describes someone with an IQ score of less than 70. An average U.S. citizen has an IQ of 100.

In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court in the Atkins v. Virginia case ruled that the execution of mentally retarded people was illegal. In a 6 to 3 decision, the judges decided that a Virginian law that had allowed state-killing of the mentally retarded was illegal because it violated the constitution's eighth amendment. This prohibits cruel and unusual punishment.

In the Couey case, Judge Ric Howard did not question this decision. But he rejected the defence's IQ test. He favoured another IQ test provided by the prosecution. This showed that Couey had an IQ of 89. Two weeks after making this choice, he sentenced Couey to death.

Three days after the passing of the sentence, Couey was transferred to the state's death row in the city of Starke. He has an automatic right of appeal. The long appeal process and the slow pace of executions means the average stay on Florida's death row is between 10 and 12 years.

Two other recent death penalty cases involving IQ tests have added to the controversy over the way courts in capital cases are dealing with the inmates of below average intelligence.

On Apr. 11, James Lee Clark was executed by lethal injection in Texas, the leading state for executions in the U.S. Numerous anti-death penalty groups protested before the execution that Clark's IQ was below 70. Clark had been convicted of murdering a teenage woman in 1993.

But in Pennsylvania this August, concerns over the mental capacities of Jose DeJesus, convicted of two killings, saved him from the threat of execution. Numerous psychologists had testified that there was a question about his mental competence. A court ruled that the death sentence passed on him had been unconstitutional because, in part, he was "mildly mentally retarded".

"The U.S. is probably now executing mentally retarded people due to them slipping through the cracks in the criminal justice

system," Jonathan Broun, a lawyer and expert on such borderline cases, told IPS in an interview.

Cassandra Stubbs, spokeswoman of the American Civil Liberties Union, said that such problems arose because of the "huge box of questions" left behind in the Supreme Court ruling banning the execution of the mentally retarded in 2002.

The court had not said what IQ score constituted mental retardation. It had also not ruled on whether an IQ test was absolutely necessary to decide the matter.

"In Florida you need an IQ score of 70 or below to be declared mentally retarded," she said. But every U.S. state -- and there are 38 out of 50 which still have the death penalty on their statute books -- were left to come up with their own standards.

Stubbs predicted that the lawyers would eventually bring cases before the Supreme Court for clarification.

Others questioned by IPS have pointed to other problem issues.

The Couey case in Florida illustrated that there was no single IQ test in use across the U.S. Two types of IQ test are used by most states, the Stanford-Binet test and the WAIS III (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale).

There was also no uniformity about at what stage in a criminal case the question of mental retardation should be raised and decided, said Richard Dieter of the Washington-based Death Penalty Information Centre.

"There are a lot of variables out there among states on this matter. Some states have written (legislation) that an attorney should bring this up before the trial. Some states say it can be raised after the trial... Texas, for example, has no laws, no legislation on this issue," he said.

Ronald J. Tabak, a prominent civil rights and death penalty lawyer based in New York, told IPS that the issue of mental retardation was usually resolved before a case came to court. But the Supreme Court had not ruled whether in court it was the judge or the jury which decided the question.

The unfolding controversy over IQ tests and mental retardation and the death penalty is bound to influence the ever-intensifying debate in the U.S. over its death penalty system.

The majority of U.S. states are now drawing back from executing those sentenced to death or juries are preferring life sentences. But the state of Texas continues its "relentless pace of state-sponsored killing", the Dallas Morning News wrote in a strongly critical editorial this month.

Both Texas and Florida are among the handful of states at the centre of another issue dominating the death penalty debate -- the use of lethal injection as an execution method. Last year a Florida executioner missed a vein and it took 34 minutes for a visibly grimacing and writhing man to die.

"Of the roughly 900 executions by lethal injections that have occurred since 1977, 40 have been botched," William Laner, and Keith H. Berge wrote in the most recent issue of the Mayo Clinic Proceedings.

At the core of the problem was the lack of training of the executioners.

But the two doctors said that under no circumstances should doctors ever be of help in the "technology of killing". "Physicians and their drugs should be physically, philosophically, and symbolically removed from execution chambers," the two wrote.

The American Medical Association prohibits doctors participating in state-authorized executions.

Absolute confidence in the U.S. justice system has been shaken by the more than 2,000 death row inmates who have had their sentence or convictions overturned since 1973. The arrival of the use of DNA and other advances in forensic sciences which have exonerated more than 100 people in other crimes has intensified questioning over the possibility of judicial mistakes and miscarriages of justice in death penalty cases.

The U.S. is also looking increasingly isolated in the world on the death penalty issue. Even some of the poorest of countries, such as the small central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan, have recently abolished capital punishment and are struggling to introduce a humane penal system which provides for eventual release of reformed prisoners back into the community.

Sometime this year, the American Bar Association is expected to issue a report on the death penalty system in the U.S. This is expected to have a section on mental retardation and the death penalty. The exact date of the report publication is not yet known, Nancy Slonim, a member of the association's media staff, told IPS. (END/2007)

DEATH PENALTY: U.N. Faults Iraq for Continued Executions

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS - A new United Nations report on human rights criticises the government in Baghdad for its continued executions of prisoners despite appeals by the United Nations and its human rights bodies for a moratorium on capital punishment.

The death penalty in Iraq -- argues the report authored by Leandro Despouy, the U.N. special rapporteur overseeing the independence of judges and lawyers -- also denies crime victims the right to the truth.

The study specifically criticises the recent execution of an Iraqi prisoner, who may have possessed key evidence relating to the 2003 bombing of the U.N. compound in battle-ravaged Baghdad.

In a report to the upcoming 62nd session of the General Assembly which begins Sep. 18, Despouy says he is "extremely concerned about the circumstances surrounding the execution of Awraz Abdel Aziz Mahmoud Sa'eed," who had confessed to having participated in the attack against the U.N. offices.

The Iraqi government, he complains, went ahead with his execution in spite of the fact that the United Nations had specifically requested the "cancellation" of the execution in order to elicit information on the bombing.

"The execution also violated the right to the truth of the victims of the attack against the U.N. offices in Baghdad, and frustrated attempts to obtain significant evidence relating to the tragic attack that cost 22 people their lives, including Sergio Vieira de Mello," a senior U.N. official who was a national of Brazil.

Vieira de Mello, who headed the Baghdad office at the time of the bombing, also held the substantive posts of U.N. high commissioner for human rights and special representative of the secretary-general in Iraq.

In his report, Despouy expresses "serious concern that individuals sentenced to death are still being executed in Iraq, despite his repeated requests and those of other U.N. bodies that such executions should be discontinued."

Furthermore, in the case of Iraq, he points out, "The implementation of the death penalty has engendered a serious violation of the right to the truth of the victims of the crimes committed by Saddam Hussein's regime."

In January, the U.N.'s High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour made an unusual public appeal to Iraqi President Jalal Talabani asking him to spare the lives of two former colleagues of Saddam Hussein.

The two officials, Awad Hamad al-Bandar and Barzan Ibrahim al-Hassan, were co-defendants of the former Iraqi president.

"The concerns I expressed just days ago with respect to the fairness and impartiality of Saddam Hussein's trial apply also to these two defendants," Arbour said. All of them were executed.

Arbour also pointed out that international law, as it currently stands, only allows the imposition of the death penalty as an exceptional measure within rigorous legal constraints.

In a report released last April, the London-based human rights organisation Amnesty International said that Iraq was the world's fourth highest user of the death penalty, ranking behind China,

Iran and Pakistan.

Since mid-2004, at least 270 people have been sentenced to death, "often after unfair trials", and more than 100 people have been hanged, including several senior officials of the former Saddam Hussein regime.

Under the U.S. occupation, following the ouster of Hussein, the death penalty was suspended. But Iraq's interim government reintroduced the death penalty in August 2004.

The government argues that the death penalty would act as a deterrent in view of the grave security situation in Iraq.

But Amnesty International has challenged this argument, pointing out that the extent of violence has increased in Iraq, rather than diminished.

AI also said that the death penalty may have contributed to the brutalisation of Iraqi society.

After an ambiguous statement on the death penalty last January, when he virtually justified the hanging of Saddam Hussein, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon later made an official pronouncement on capital punishment.

Calling for the gradual phasing out of the death penalty worldwide, Ban said: "I believe that life is precious and must be protected and respected, and that all human beings have the right to live in dignity. International law affirms these values."

"I recognise the growing trend in international law and in national practice towards a phasing out of the death penalty. I encourage that trend," Ban said.

As member states are taking their decisions, he said, "I expect they will comply with all aspects of international human rights law. As you know, I have also urged restraint by the Iraqi authorities in the execution of death sentences imposed by the Iraqi High Tribunal." (END/2007)

News from International NGOs

AMNESTY AND WORLD COALITION CALL FOR ACTION

Ahead of the fourth World Day Against the Death Penalty on October 10, AI and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty highlighted failures of justice in the sentencing and implementation of the Death penalty. In documents posted on its website, Amnesty said: "The death penalty is never acceptable, and every execution constitutes an extreme violation of the right to life. The violation is exacerbated when judgements are passed after an unfair judicial process." It added: Discrimination, unfair trials, judicial error, the execution of child offenders and those suffering from mental disabilities all amount to a failure of justice; and provide more compelling reasons to abolish the death penalty. Amnesty listed five cases in five countries to reinforce the need for abolition of death penalty.

China: She Xianglin and Teng Xingshan were both convicted of the murder of their wives and sentenced to death. She Xianglin was later resentenced to 15 years imprisonment. In both cases, the wives reappeared several years later. She Xianglin was released after 11 years in prison in 2005 and officially cleared of all charges. Teng Xingshan, however, had been executed in 1989. Wherever the death penalty is used, the risk of executing the innocent remains.

Saudi Arabia: Siti Zainab Binti Duhri Rupa is an Indonesian mother of two children. In 1999 she was arrested and charged with the murder of her employer. Denied access to legal advice, her family or embassy, she confessed to the crime. Foreign nations face discrimination in the judicial system of Saudi Arabia and around half of those executed come from abroad. Many did not understand the language in which their trial was held. Siti Zainab remains imprisoned and is at risk of execution.

Nigeria: "Gloria" (she has requested her identity be protected) was arrested and charged with murder at the age of 17. Forced to wait 7 years before her trial, she was then tried without legal representation and sentenced to death. She remains unable to lodge a legal appeal because she has no lawyer. She has been imprisoned for the last 11 years in Urguru prison.

USA: Scott Panetti suffers from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. After his divorce, he dressed in military clothes and murdered his ex-wife's parents. He then changed his clothes and turned himself into the police. In spite of his acknowledged and long history of mental health problems, he was declared fit to stand trial and legally represent himself. In court, he dressed as a cowboy and often made incoherent remarks, mounting no formal legal defence. He was sentenced to death in 1995 and remains on death row in Texas.

Iran: Shahram Pourmansouri was sentenced to death for attempted hijacking of an aircraft in 2001 when aged 17. International law expressly forbids the execution of those under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. Iran and Pakistan are the only countries to currently execute child offenders (although Pakistan's laws forbid it). Shahram Pourmansouri was scheduled to be hanged in January 2005 but received a stay of execution. He remains condemned to death.

POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF SCOPE OF DEATH PENALTY IN PERU

Peru's Congress is considering three draft bills which would extend the scope of the death penalty, according to Amnesty. The first includes the rape of children under the age of nine, the rape of physically or mentally disabled people, and the rape of children between nine and 18 years old where the rape is followed by murder of the victim. The second two bills include the rape of children under the age of seven where the rapist also kills the victim. The draft bills, submitted on September 11 and 19 by the *Unidad Nacional* (National Unity Party) and the ruling APRA party respectively, would involve the expansion of Article 140 of Peru's Constitution (1993) which allows for the death penalty only for those convicted of treason in time of war and for terrorism. Two of the draft bills also suggest the withdrawal of Peru from the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR), which prohibits the extension of its state parties' death penalty laws.

Amnesty says: If Peru were to expand the death penalty by passing this legislation it would be in violation of Article 4(2) of the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR), also known as the Pact of San José, which Peru ratified in 1978. Article 4(2) states that "the application of ...[the death penalty] should not be extended to crimes to which it does not presently apply". In 1983 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued an advisory opinion emphasizing that "the Convention imposes restrictions designed to delimit strictly its application and scope, in order to reduce the application of the penalty to bring about its gradual disappearance..."

MORE THAN 7,400 PEOPLE IN DEATH ROW IN PAKISTAN

So far this year 70 executions have been reported (60 of them in Punjab province) and at least 250 people have been sentenced to death. More than 7,400 men and 36 women are under sentence of death in prison, says Amnesty. Pakistan retains the death penalty by hanging for a range of offences including murder, drug-smuggling, rape, attempted murder, kidnapping and acts of terrorism. In 2005, 52 people were executed. The execution of Mirza Tahir Hussain, a UK national, has been postponed at least three times, most recently when President Pervez Musharraf granted a stay of execution until October 1. However, no executions are carried out during the religious month of Ramadan which ends this year on October 23. Mirza Tahir Hussain was convicted of murder in 1989 but had his conviction overturned on two occasions, once shortly after his initial conviction in 1989 and again in 1996 when he was acquitted of all charges against him. A week after his acquittal, his case was referred to the Federal Shari'a Court to consider charges from the original case, including robbery involving murder, which fall under Islamic offences against property law. The entire case was reopened and in 1998 the Federal Shari'a Court sentenced Mirza Tahir Hussain to death, despite the judgement being split with two judges in favour and one against this decision.

INDONESIA: FIRST EXECUTIONS SINCE 2005

Fabianus Tibo, Domingus da Silva and Marinus Riwu were executed by firing squad on September 22 at a secret location in central Sulawesi province, Amnesty reports. The men were sentenced to death in April 2001 for premeditated murder and inciting riots, following ethnic and religious violence in the district of Poso, central Sulawesi, in May 2000. The case had attracted both local and international attention. The European Union condemned the executions and requested a moratorium be instituted. Pope Benedict XVI made a personal appeal for clemency to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on August 11. At least 90 people are believed to be under sentence of death in Indonesia. The last previous execution took place in May 2005.

SHARP RISE IN EXECUTIONS IN IRAQ

Executions carried out by the Iraqi authorities increased sharply in the month of September, says Amnesty. A few days following the hand-over of the notorious Abu Ghraib prison from U.S. military control to the Iraqi authorities, the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki announced that 27 people were hanged in Baghdad on September 6. The 27 individuals reportedly came from a number of Iraq's 18 provinces and included one woman. Only two of those executed were convicted of terrorism, the other 25 were convicted of murder and kidnap, according to an Iraqi Justice Ministry official quoted in the London *Daily Telegraph*.

On September 21 eleven people were hanged in the city of Arbil, in the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq. These were reportedly the

first executions to be carried out in the Kurdish region since 1992. The 11 men, said to be members of the armed group Ansar al-Islam, had been sentenced to death in March after being convicted of killings and kidnappings in the Kurdish region during 2003 and 2004. Since the re-imposition of the death penalty in Iraq in August 2004, scores of people have been sentenced to death and reports suggest that there are more than 200 people in prison awaiting execution. Exact figures on convictions and executions are not readily available and are not always made public, but it is estimated that approximately 50 individuals have been executed since the reimposition of the death penalty in 2004. The first executions were carried out on 1 September 2005 when three people were executed, and 13 others were executed on 9 March 2006, all for "terrorist activities".

THE HISTORY OF CHINESE LAW IS AN ARGUMENT FOR ABOLITION

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty says in an article by Morag Young on its website: In the run-up to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, action is increasing to call China to account on its copious use of the death penalty. Far from being a western whim, abolition of capital punishment in China would be a return to an imperial decision made in the 18th century. Was China the first country in history to abolish the death penalty? This was one of the revelations made at a recent conference on the place of this punishment in Chinese culture and history, organised in June at the Collège de France in Paris.

Jérôme Bourgon, a researcher at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique français [French National Scientific Research Centre], presented the results of his research on the death penalty in the imperial penal codes. By referring to Chinese legal sources, the researcher has observed that the death penalty was originally only used for proven killers. "As soon as a homicide occurred, the State was beholden to the victim to find the guilty person and punish him/her", he explains. Death sentences were therefore at the top of a pyramid of punishments ranging from beating to beheading. 'Death sentences' plural because a distinction was made between methods of execution which did not damage the body as a whole, such as strangulation, and those which involved mutilation which were judged much more harshly for religious reasons.

The sight of his wounded body removed all hope for a sentenced prisoner that one day he would become an ancestor venerated by later generations. Strangulation, although more painful, was therefore seen to be less serious and the duration of the punishment could be converted by the executioner. "Pain was not valued in the Chinese penal system", explains Zhang Ning, a researcher at the University of Geneva. However, the religious dimension of the death penalty made the prospect of legal mistakes even more terrifying: the ghosts of those executed erroneously could return to haunt the visible world...

HANDS OFF CAIN TO HONOUR KAGAME ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Hands Off Cain awarded on August 30 the Rwandan President Paul Kagame with the "The Abolitionist of the Year 2007" Award for scrapping capital punishment from the criminal laws of the country, RNA reports. The prize was awarded through Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi. The occasion coincided with the release of the annual 2007 "The Death Penalty Worldwide" report of the organisation that has been prefaced by President Kagame. Romano Prodi wrote the introduction of the report. "The abolition of the death penalty and the adherence to the campaign for a universal moratorium on capital punishment are acts of remarkable symbolic value, through which Rwanda has emblematically shown the world the possibility of an end to the absurd cycle of vendetta and that justice and lawfulness cannot be achieved with capital punishment", the President said in a statement. Last year, the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front party led by Mr. Kagame campaigned to abolish the death penalty in Rwanda. Despite bitter criticism of the plan by Genocide survivors, the Rwanda Senate put the final stamp to the debate by adopting the change in June.

RADICALS ACHIEVE OBJECTIVE OF PUTTING UN MORATORIUM CAMPAIGN ON TRACK

The militant Radicals, committed to a hunger strike to support the UN Moratorium on capital punishment, have decided to suspend their non violent action, Hands Off Cain reported on September 28. "Our hunger strike started on September 2nd, and was converted to an indefinite hunger strike on September 17th. It has clearly achieved its objective. The initiative for the adoption of a resolution for the Universal Moratorium on capital punishment at the General Assembly has seriously been put on track. At last! Recently, a series of politically relevant facts of undeniable importance have occurred.

These include:

- September 11: at the initiative of Sergio D'Elia, Radical Parliamentarian from Rosa nel Pugno, the Foreign Affairs Commissions of both the House and the Senate called an extraordinary joint meeting.
- September 22: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed Aldo Ajello as the special envoy for the Moratorium at the Ministerial Session of the UN General Assembly.
- From September 24: Sergio D'Elia and Matteo Mecacci, the Radical Party's UN Representative, were part of the Italian delegation to the UN.
- September 25: Council President Romano Prodi, reorganising his schedule, spoke at the opening of the 62nd General Assembly and made the Moratorium the central point of his speech.
- September 27: on the initiative of the Radical European Parliamentarian Marco Pannella and Marco Cappato, and with the support of Pasqualina Napoletano (Left Democrats), Monica Frassoni (Greens), Luisa Morgantini and Vittorio Agnoletto (Re-formed Communists), Marco Rizzo (PdCI) and Roberta Angelilli (AN), the great majority of the European Parliament successfully voted for a resolution. The resolution recognised Italy's leadership, and also renewed and strengthened the mandate for the immediate submission of the pro Moratorium Resolution at the commencement of the UN. The Parliament decreed that "the political principle contained in the

resolution must be the adoption of a Universal Moratorium as a crucial step towards the abolition of the death penalty”.

- September 28: Minister D'Alema, together with his Portuguese counterpart, called a meeting for the presentation and promotion of the pro Moratorium resolution. Another 40 Foreign Ministers immediately agreed to participate in the meeting, as well as two of the 55 Nobel Prize laureates that signed the appeal to Prodi by the Radical Party and Hands Off Cain in June.

- In the last few days, the President of the Italian Council and the Foreign Minister have adopted a decidedly new attitude. They have started to listen to and implement ideas by the Radicals.

WORLD PRESS REVIEW – March 2007

MEPS OVERSTEP POLAND IN CAMPAIGN AGAINST DEATH PENALTY

A clear majority of European lawmakers overrode Poland's opposition to their campaign against the death penalty. Members of the European Parliament supported a Councilbacked resolution calling for an immediate moratorium on the death penalty to be presented at the current 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York and overwhelmingly voted in favour, 504-45, to establish a European Day against the Death Penalty, wrote the New Europe weekly on Sep. 30.

It said: Europe has always been the forerunner in campaigning against executions. The “EU is on the frontline amongst abolitionists throughout the world,” Secretary of State for European Affairs Manuel Lobo Antunes said. He was in Strasbourg representing the Council Presidency of Portugal – the first EU country to abolish the death penalty. With or without Poland, the campaign will go on. Lisbon will host a high-level conference on the issue on October 9. The European Council is due to table the resolution to the UNGA early to mid-October. The death penalty “replaces justice with vengeance,” Italian MEP Luisa Morgantini said in the Plenary debate in Strasbourg on September 25. German MEP Martin Schulz called it “the lowest point of human morale” and “the opposite of human dignity.” Europe has met with internal opposition though.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROCLAIMS DAY AGAINST DEATH PENALTY

Afp reported on Sep. 27: The Council of Europe proclaimed a European Day against the Death Penalty for October 10, after Poland blocked European Union plans to do the same. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which brings together representatives from 47 nations, expressed the hope that the EU would join the initiative “as soon as possible”. The largely Catholic Poland blocked European Union plans to designate an anti-death penalty day by insisting that right-to-life issues like abortion and euthanasia should be similarly marked. The Council of Europe is a pan-European forum separate from the EU. While an influential voice, it has no actual powers. It is able to reach an agreement more easily than the European Union on such issues as the EU requires unanimity whereas the Council of Europe, which concentrates on rights issues, works on a simple majority system.

NEW SOUTH AFRICAN PARTY WANTS DEATH PENALTY

Quoting Sapa IOL (Independent Online) reported Sep. 10 from Cape Town: The newly-formed National Peoples Party wants to bring back the death penalty, and seeks tougher action on drugs. These are two of the points in its draft statement of principles. Party leader David Sasman said the document would have to be discussed at a party congress before a final set could be drawn up. The draft said the NPP

wanted mandatory death sentences for crimes against the state, murder, rape, drug trafficking and molestation. It said it would introduce an “effective management system” for safer neighbourhoods, and would participate in “the destruction of shebeens, drug outlets and gangsterism”. The NPP also promised accelerated housing delivery, including rental stock, a grant system for all unemployed people, and a nationwide medical insurance system.

RWANDA CALLS FOR END TO DEATH PENALTY

Associated Press reported on Sep. 28: Rwanda joined other countries in appealing for a global moratorium on executions, stressing that if it could abolish the death penalty while perpetrators of the 1994 genocide still await sentencing, no country should use it. Diplomats and human right organizations met at the United Nations to push for a global moratorium on executions with the goal of ending the death penalty altogether. Rwandan Minister for Cooperation Rosemary Museminali said that her country, which outlawed the death penalty earlier this year, should serve as a model for others. She said that even though genocide perpetrators are still around, “we still feel it is our moral obligation to preserve the right of life.” Rwanda abolished capital punishment in part to encourage European and other countries to extradite suspects in its genocide back to Rwanda.

OVERSEAS FILIPINO FACING DEATH PENALTY MAY BE SAVED

Inquirer reported on Sep. 17: A Filipino domestic helper facing the death penalty in Kuwait for killing her female employer could get her sentence reduced after the Philippine Embassy convinced the victim's mother and two siblings to forgive her. Vice President Noli de Castro, presidential adviser on overseas Filipino workers, relayed the news from Ambassador to Kuwait Ricardo Endaya. De Castro said the embassy was now working to convince the victim's estranged husband as well as another sibling to forgive Marilou Ranario, a move which could reduce the death sentence meted by a Kuwaiti court. Ranario, from Bicol, admitted to killing her employer in January 2005 after the latter had repeatedly maligned Filipinos.

WHY DEATH PENALTY IN A CIVILISED SOCIETY?

In an article posted on 'Meri News' website on Sep. 17, Narendra Ch wrote: A debate on death penalty is triggered in India whenever it is awarded in sensational cases like the Bombay blasts or the attack on Parliament. In view of the sensitivities involved, the death sentence has also been assuming political tones. Our politicians lose no opportunity to look at the issue from the vote-bank angle. However it should be seen from a humanitarian and human rights angle. We strongly believe that the Indian government has the right and the obligation to ensure law and order and protect its citizens

from violent crimes. However, in its attempt to curb terrorism, the government should ensure that protection of human rights is not relegated to second place.

The writer continued: We sympathise with the relatives of those killed in the attack on the Indian parliament complex in December, 2001. We do not want to downplay the seriousness of the crime or the suffering it has inflicted on the victims. But we should remember that death penalty is the ultimate, cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment that a civilized society can levy. Human rights organisations like Amnesty International express their unconditional opposition to death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the right to be not subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In fact, the death penalty has never been shown to be a more effective deterrent than other, more humane forms of punishment.

Referring to the day of local action around the world on October 10, celebrated as the World Day against the Death Penalty, Narendra Ch said: The objective is to make a concerted push for its abolition worldwide by mobilising popular support. Support is to be mobilised by encouraging public discussion and strengthening public opposition to death penalty, besides brining pressure to bear upon retentionist countries to stop executions and abolish the death penalty. The death penalty is not an abstract or theoretical issue. The decision to apply it means that living men and women must be singled out and put to death. It is the reality of its use around the world...the use of the death penalty against child offenders, the discrimination inherent in who is selected for execution, the ever-present risk of the execution of the innocent, or of those suffering from mental illness and the use of unfair trials in the administration of capital punishment that add to the unacceptable face of State killing.

BEIJING REINS IN THE DEATH PENALTY

The Toronto Star commented in an editorial on Sep. 23: China may be a fast-modernizing nation, Olympic host and emerging superpower, but in one respect it remains a backward society. It employs the world's busiest executioners. Amnesty International reports that China imposed the death penalty more than 1,000 times last year, based on known cases, but cautions that the true number may be far higher, at 8,000. We don't know because China provides no public accounting. Even so, China accounted for two-thirds of the world's 1,600 known executions last year. Collectively, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan and the United States accounted for 440 of the remaining 600.

Given China's lead in this grim business, it comes as good news that the Supreme Court there has just ordered judges to curb the bloodbath. The death penalty should be imposed only on "an extremely small number of serious offenders" convicted in "heinous cases that result in serious social damage," the court advised. Specifically, the court suggested that crimes of passion and economic crimes should not automatically carry a death penalty,

where compensation and a jail sentence will suffice. Earlier this year, Beijing also mandated the Supreme Court to review all death sentences, as a final check on lower courts.

Hopefully, China's decision to pension off some executioners marks the beginning of the end of capital punishment there, in line with a healthy global trend. Amnesty reports that 133 countries, including Canada, have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice, while 64 retain it. And United Nations tribunals judging war crimes and crimes against humanity do not use it.

TENNESSEE GOVERNOR SAYS RULING ON LETHAL INJECTION 'WRONG'

Associated Press writer Erik Schelzig reported on Sep. 22 from Nashville, Tennessee: Governot Phil Bredesen disagrees with a federal judge's ruling that Tennessee's lethal injection procedure is unconstitutional and says it will be more difficult to appeal than in previous cases. The state would have a difficult time meeting the criteria to make the state's lethal injections constitutional under U.S. District Judge Aleta Trauger's ruling, Bredesen told The Associated Press.

"She's kind of created a Catch-22 for us," Bredesen said Friday. "She decries the lack of medically trained personnel involved in the execution, and of course ... it's very hard to get trained medical personnel to participate in any fashion." Trauger said state Department of Correction Commissioner George Little adopted the new execution protocols in April despite having knowledge about risks of excessive pain for inmates. Little did not give enough consideration to a recommendation to discard the standard three-drug lethal injection cocktail in favor of a single-drug method, Trauger said. Current training and medical expertise are also not sufficient to ensure a painless execution, she said. Bredesen, a Democrat, defended Little's decision not to go with the single-drug method, and said he disagrees with Trauger's push for an untested lethal injection procedure.

"I think this is the wrong decision in this case. I think she's trying to push us into uncharted territory, which I'm going to have to think carefully about," he said. "And I think she's made it very difficult to fix the three-drug protocol." Bredesen said he hasn't yet decided whether to appeal the case to the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, but acknowledged that any challenge would be more difficult than previous _ and successful _ moves to reverse temporary injunctions for Tennessee executions.

(Full report: <http://www.wkrn.com/nashville/news/ap-ap-interview-governor-says-ruling-on-lethal-injection-wrong/119519.htm>)

Editor's Note : The copyright for items included in the world press review lies with the respective media mentioned as sources. This review is purported to provide a glimpse of the coverage of death penalty related issues in the global media. This review is in no case intended for commercial purposes. -



Read the latest information about worldwide efforts to abolish the death penalty!
<http://www.ipsnews.net/>

Subscribe!
'Crime and Justice' - Sign up for IPS's free monthly newsletter about worldwide efforts to abolish the death penalty!