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LIBYA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION
AND URGES AGAINST THE USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY.

Amnesty International has urged Colonel Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi to ensure that a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation is set up to establish the circumstances in which scores of political prisoners and detainees were killed in Abu Salim Prison in Tripoli at the beginning of July.

"The findings of the investigation and the names of all those killed should be made public as soon as possible," the organization said.

According to reports received by Amnesty International scores of political prisoners and detainees in Abu Salim Prison in Tripoli were killed during a one-week mutiny which reportedly started on 5 July 1996. The mutiny was said to have been caused by the appalling conditions in the prison. Political prisoners had reportedly complained on a number of occasions to the prison authorities about the lack of medical care, the inadequate hygiene, overcrowded cells and the poor diet. Some prisoners were said to be suffering from various diseases, including skin diseases, and had not been treated.

A number of guards were allegedly taken as hostages by the prisoners who refused to release them until their demand for an improvement in the prison conditions was met. Special security forces allegedly stormed the prison and deliberately shot at prisoners and the hostages, which led to scores of deaths.

The human rights organization also wrote to Colonel Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi urging him to reduce the use of death penalty and to commute all death sentences in Libya.

In an announcement broadcast by Libyan Television on 16 July 1996, the General People's Committee for Justice and Public Security stated that the death penalty will be applied to those 'who speculate in food, clothes or housing during a state of war or blockade and may be applied for crimes related to drugs, alcohol and speculation in foreign currency. The new laws were reportedly drafted at the general conference of the General People's Congress on 15 June 1996 and were published in the official gazette on 15 July, the date they came into effect.

"There is no evidence that increasing the number of offences punishable by the death penalty is an effective deterrent to any such crimes," Amnesty International said.

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LIBYA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS THE LATEST EXECUTIONS OF
POLITICAL PRISONERS.

Amnesty International strongly condemns the execution yesterday of eight men in Libya. The eight people, six senior army officers and two civilians, were executed in the morning of 2 January 1997.

"These executions are an outrage" Amnesty International said today. "From the moment of their arrest more than three years ago their case has been shrouded in secrecy. They have been held in unknown locations all that time, completely cut off from their families and the outside world, and every trial hearing has been held in camera."

The six army officers were identified as Colonel Miflah Qarun al-Wirfalli, Colonel Mostafa Abu al-Qassim Mas'ud al-Kikli, Lieutenant-Colonel Sa'ad Saleh Farag, Major Khalil Salam Mohammad al-Jidiq, Major Mostafa Ibhayl al-Firjani and Major Ramadhan al-'Ayhuri. The two civilians were Dr Sa'ad Mibbah al-'Anin al-Zubaydi and Sulayman Ghayth Miflah.

The men were reportedly charged with "passing defence secrets to foreign states [the United States of America]" and membership of "a banned organization linked to agents of foreign governments". This organization is the National Front for the Salvation of Libya - NFSL, the main Libyan opposition group operating in exile.

The Court acquitted six other army officers, including Lieutenant-Colonel Mohammad al-Ghul and Flight-Captain Sadeq Shaqluf, and two civilians.

The people involved in this case were among dozens arrested and detained in the aftermath of a rebellion by army units around the city of Misrata in October 1993. Three of those executed gave televised "confessions", reportedly as a result of torture, to being American "spies" in early March 1994. They said they had been recruited as American Intelligence agents by members of the NFSL. Trial before the lower military court reportedly took place at the end of 1995. Amnesty International has also received reports that the Supreme Military Court's verdict was given and video-taped about a month ago, but was not made public until 1 January 1997 when the Libyan television announced the news of the death sentences. Espionage is punishable by death in Libya and so is mere membership of an opposition group.

"The blanket of secrecy heightens our fears that the basic human rights of these individuals were disregarded from the outset" Amnesty International said. The organization had repeatedly requested information about their legal status and whereabouts and sent urgent appeals after reports were received that they had been tortured, and then sentenced to death. To date no response has been received from the Libyan authorities.

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