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Amnesty International calls for probe of Westville prison

WESTVILLE, Ind. (AP) — Prison rights advocates who have protested conditions inside Indiana's toughest prison have a new ally — Amnesty International.

The London-based human rights organization has sent a letter to Department of Correction Commissioner James E. Aiken asking for an investigation of the Maximum Correctional Complex "with the aim of eliminating those aspects that may constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

The 200-bed prison opened in 1991 was designed to isolate particularly disruptive and dangerous inmates who cannot be controlled at other facilities, prisons spokesman Kevin Moore said.

Conditions at the prison are "absolutely barbarous," Chicago civil rights lawyer Erica Thompson said Tuesday.

Thompson said inmates are shackled hand and foot during visits with lawyers, who are separated from their clients by glass shields and can speak with them only over a telephone.

"The prisoners' rights are not

being protected," she said. "They're being held absolutely incommunicado."

The restrictions effectively subvert constitutionally protected attorney-client privileges, she said. Most of the affected inmates are blacks and minorities, she said.

"People in Indiana have to realize this is being done in their name. It's basically, 'Are you going to be Sini Valley or not?'" she said, referring to the California community where a jury acquitted four white Los Angeles police officers accused of beating black motorist Rodney King.

Maureen Kelly, an Amnesty International official in Chicago, said the critical letter was issued by the London office, which had closed for the day without releasing the text.

The full text was to be released at a news conference today outside the prison.

Moore said inmates' rights have not been violated.

"We have a population at that facility who are violent, assaultive and highly manipulative," Moore said. "They don't like being there. Their activities — grievances, hunger strikes, self-mutilations — are to try to force us to change to their

liking. These people are not in power."

The Department of Correction received a court order Tuesday to force-feed one of three inmates who have been on a hunger strike since May 17, Moore said. Inmate William Sampley agreed to end the strike once he was removed from his cell and transferred to the prison hospital.

"Like we do in every hunger strike, food is made available and medical personnel monitor the inmates daily. In this case, the doctor thought there was the possibility of health problems if he continued to refuse nourishment," Moore said.

Newly assigned prisoners remained locked in their single-bed cells 23 hours a day and cannot meet or talk with other prisoners, he said. Moore denied rumors of beatings and said inmates can win limited privileges by following the prison's strict rules.

In an unrelated matter, Moore said a lockdown of the State Prison at Michigan City could be ended in a few days. The tighter security was imposed June 1 after guards discovered several homemade weapons, including knives and sections of pipe.

Fire hits downtown DeMotte

DEMOTTE, Ind. (AP) — A row of businesses was destroyed today in a fire in downtown DeMotte, authorities said.

There were no injuries.

The blaze was believed to have

osier Perot supporter running for U.S. Senate

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Dr. Joseph H. Selliken Jr., a supporter of independent presidential candidate Ross Perot, today announced

for Congress. When none came forward to seek the Senate seat, Selliken said he decided to do it.

He said Perot "could use the