

Amnesty to fight rights abuse of homosexuals

By GENE KRAMER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Amnesty International announced a six-month campaign yesterday to combat rights abuses against homosexuals in the United States.

The announcement by Amnesty International USA, the U. S. branch of the London-based human-rights organization, coincided with the release of a 24-nation survey on the treatment of homosexuals.

Amnesty called it a groundbreaking report placing "government re-

pression of gay men and lesbians squarely on the international human-rights agenda."

Five U. S. states apply antisodomy laws only to homosexuals, and "Amnesty International would consider an individual imprisoned under these laws a prisoner of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release," the organization said. The states are Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Montana and Tennessee.

Amnesty International defends what it calls victims of political, religious and ethnic persecution, tor-

ture, violence and discrimination.

Curt Goering, acting director of Amnesty USA, said the group wants to elevate gay rights as a mainstream issue before the public and such bodies as the U. N. Human Rights Commission.

The organization's international council decided to take up homosexual rights in 1991. Exhaustive investigations showed that gays and lesbians, like political prisoners traditionally defended by Amnesty, are "vulnerable to the pretexts governments use to lock people up," Goering said.

Sexual orientation is not mentioned in the 1948 U. N. Declaration of Human Rights, but homosexuals are implicitly protected, and Amnesty wants to ensure that "what is implicit in language is explicit in practice," he said.

The organization said it considers "prisoners of conscience" anyone detained for peacefully advocating gay rights or "solely because of homosexuality." Amnesty said its six-month U. S. campaign would include the petitioning of state governments to revoke laws singling out homosexuals.