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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 07/92

Contained in this weekly update are an external items on Niger, Venezuela, Kenya, and internal items for response on Saudi Arabia and Israel.

If you have queries on Chad or Zaire about possible extrajudicial executions, please refer to urgent actions issued yesterday - AI Index: AFR 20/05/92 and AFR 62/03/92 respectively.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Philippines - Embargoed for 0200 hrs gmt 26 February 1992

An international news release and questions and answers to go with publication on extrajudicial executions. The campaign is being launched in Manila. News release was sent last week, Q&A and details of launch will be sent this week.

See Weekly Update 06/92 for detailed media strategy.

Tunisia - 4 March 1992

A document and targeted news release about incommunicado detention and torture.

Malawi - 6 March 1992

A weekly update item to be sent to targeted press with a document on prison conditions, cruel punishment and detention without trial will be sent to you tomorrow. The document will arrive in this week's mailing.

India - 25 March 1992

An international news release to go with publication for the campaign against rape, torture and deaths in custody. A major international launch is planned for London.

Togo - tentatively 8 April 1992

A document and targeted news release about impunity are tentatively scheduled for 8 April 1992, to coincide with the anniversary of a massacre on 10 April 1991.

POSSIBLE NEWS INITIATIVES, STILL TO BE CONFIRMED

South Africa

The research team is planning a document, but as yet cannot give a definite date. It will have an international news release - we will keep you informed of a date, which currently seems likely to be mid-April.

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2. AFR 43/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

19 February 1992

NIGER: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING VISIT

Two Amnesty International representatives will be visiting the Republic of Niger from 23 February to 2 March 1992. They will be collecting information about the working methods of the Commission responsible for investigating political crimes and human rights abuses, the Commission des crimes et abus politiques. This commission was set up by a National Conference on 14 August 1991 and is scheduled to continue its work until January 1993 while a transitional government remains in power. The commission is carrying out investigations into past human rights violations such as the killings of student demonstrators in February 1990 and the arrest, torture and killings of hundreds of Tuareg between March and May 1990.

The two representatives will also collect information about other human rights developments in the country.

According to AI procedures, its representatives are not authorized to make public statements about their visit. They will, upon completion of the mission, submit a report to Amnesty International's International Executive Committee.

An Amnesty International representative last visited Niger in April 1991 to observe the trial of members of the Tuareg community.

3. AMR 53/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

19 February 1992

VENEZUELA: AI URGES GOVERNMENT NOT TO VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS FOLLOWING COUP ATTEMPT

Amnesty International has written to the government of Venezuela urging it to ensure that measures introduced after an attempted coup do not lead to human rights violations.

Following the attempted coup on 4 February 1992, the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association and the freedom not to be detained by an administrative decision have been suspended in Venezuela. All three rights are contained in the Venezuelan Constitution.

Amnesty International also requested that whenever evidence exists that a death or assault was caused by illegal actions of the security forces, these should be investigated impartially and anyone found responsible for human rights violations should be brought to justice. Moreover, it asked that all detainees should be given prompt access to relatives, legal counsel and doctors.

In a telex sent to President Carlos Andrés Pérez, the organization said it was fully aware of the difficult situation Venezuela is going through. However, the organization stressed that the suspension of the above-mentioned rights must never be used for the detention of prisoners of conscience or in such a way that may facilitate torture or ill-treatment.

The attempted coup happened in the early hours of 4 February 1992, led by a rebellious faction of the armed forces. Although the insurrection was controlled within two days, in an effort to control dissent the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez suspended a number of individual guarantees. Since the attempted coup, there have been reports of detentions of people suspected of having supported the coup and reports of ill-treatment, which Amnesty International is investigating.

4. AFR 32/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

19 February 1992

KENYA: 4 PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE RELEASED PENDING THEIR COURT APPEAL

Amnesty International welcomes the release, pending their appeal to the High Court, of four prisoners of conscience. The four prisoners -- George Anyona, former member of parliament; Edward Oyugi, former professor of educational psychology; Ngotho Kariuki, former university dean; and Augustine Kathangu, a dissident official of the ruling party -- were released on 14 February. They each had to pay deposits totalling Kenya shillings 1200,000 (£24,000), pending their appeal, which is expected to be heard in June or July 1992.

All four are currently suffering ill-health due to torture, poor diet and unsanitary prison conditions. During their imprisonment they had been refused adequate medical treatment. At the time of his release George Anyona was still awaiting transfer to Kenyatta National Hospital from Kamiti Prison's Sick Bay, despite being referred for treatment there over a month earlier.

The four had been sentenced to seven years each on 10 July 1991 for supposedly holding a seditious meeting in a Nairobi bar. They had been tortured and held for six months in custody before their six-month-long trial began. The trial judge summarily dismissed their torture complaints, and although there was no evidence that they had used or planned violence against the government, found them guilty of sedition. A major piece of evidence at their trial, which purported to be a shadow cabinet list which included George Anyona, has been discredited. On 18 January, the list was revealed as a fake by a former member of parliament, John Keen, who had resigned to join a new opposition party. John Keen had originally announced the existence of the list in July 1990 when assistant minister in the Office of the President.

Amnesty International had repeatedly called for the unconditional release of these four prisoners of conscience. The organization continues to urge that their allegations of torture be investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice. While in prison the four had received over 3,800 cards from AI members and supporters.

5. MDE 15/WU 04/92 INTERNAL FOR RESPONSE

19 February 1992

ISRAEL/LEBANON: KILLINGS OF ISRAELI SOLDIERS, PALESTINIANS IN REFUGEE CAMPS, HIZBULLAH LEADER 'ABBAS MUSAWI AND OTHERS WITH HIM.

SUMMARY OF KILLINGS

On the night of 14 February three Israeli soldiers were killed in their base in north Israel, near the border with the West Bank. The three were hacked to death. A fourth soldier was wounded. Their attackers escaped with the soldiers' weapons. In Tunis, a spokesperson for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was quoted as saying that the attack on the soldiers was carried out by Palestinian civilians, not guerrillas, "using their legitimate right to resist the Israeli army of occupation".

The Israeli authorities said that al-Fatah, the main faction within the PLO, was responsible for the killings of the soldiers. In the early hours of 16 February, Israeli aircraft launched attacks apparently against Palestinian guerilla bases in the refugee camps of 'Ain al-Helweh and Rashidiyyah in south Lebanon. At least four civilians were reportedly killed, including two children, and several other people were injured, including four described by press reports as "PLO guards". Israeli authorities said their attacks were aimed at bases of al-Fatah.

In the afternoon of 16 February, 'Abbas Musawi, Secretary General of the Lebanese group Hizbullah (Party of God), was attacked and killed by Israeli forces in south Lebanon. He was travelling towards Beirut, after attending a rally in the village of Jibshit, when Israeli helicopters attacked his car convoy with missiles. He was killed, together with his wife, six-year-old son, and a number of bodyguards travelling with him.

Moshe Arens, Israel's Minister of Defence, was quoted as having said that 'Abbas Musawi was responsible for attacks against Israel and that his killing by Israeli forces on 16 February "was not a coincidence". He said it was a "message to all terrorist organizations".

Early on 17 February missiles were reportedly fired at Israel from south Lebanon, causing no casualties. An artillery duel ensued, apparently involving also units of the regular Lebanese army.

AI'S POSITION ON THE KILLINGS

You may be approached by the media or others for a comment -- our response is that AI takes no position on these killings. You may add that Amnesty International opposes the death penalty and extrajudicial executions by governments, as well as deliberate and arbitrary killings by political opposition groups. It's worth stressing that international humanitarian law prohibits all deliberate attacks against civilians not taking part in hostilities. However, it does not prohibit attacks on soldiers and leaders of organizations involved in an armed conflict, as long as they have not laid down their arms or are not placed "hors de combat" by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause.

If you need to elaborate further, please contact the IS.

6. MDE 23/WU 01/92 INTERNAL FOR RESPONSE

19 February 1992

SAUDI ARABIA: MUHAMMAD AL-FASI

In November 1991, advertisements appeared in national newspapers in France, the UK and the USA raising the case of Muhammad al-Fasi and demanding his release. The advertisements were accompanied by a list of signatories, among them prominent writers, artists and academics in support of al-Fasi. The advertisements had been placed by the "International Committee for the Defense of Muhammad al-Fasi".

In January 1992, advertisements again appeared in the International Herald Tribune and other newspapers in the name of the "Former International Committee for the Defense of Muhammad al-Fasi". They stated that the signatories from the November advertisements had claimed that their support to al-Fasi had been falsely attributed.

Amnesty International is unable to comment on either of these advertisements. Work on the case continues.

Muhammed al-Fasi, a Saudi Arabian businessman, was arrested during a visit to Jordan on 2 October 1991 and subsequently extradited to Saudi Arabia. He is said to have been detained because of his public criticism of the Saudi Arabian government during the Gulf War. Currently held in a secret location in Riyadh, there are reports that he has been subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Amnesty International has made appeals on behalf to the Jordanian and Saudi Arabian authorities.

Further information and concerns about Muhammad al-Fasi are outlined in the Urgent Actions MDE 23/03/91, MDE-4 23/04/91 and Medical Action MDE 23/05/91.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 07/92

Contained in this addition to the weekly update are external items

1.NEWS INITIATIVES - UPDATE

India - 25 March 1992

As well as the news release and document, the IS press office will be sending out the text of the Focus article on India, due to appear in April's International Newsletter, to most media contacts. Obviously, you may decide to do the same - but unfortunately the printed version will not be sent out to you until the week beginning 9 March 1992 which may be too late. However, many of you will already have received the text of the article - if you need it and don't have it, please contact the IS press office and we will send it out as soon as possible.

Weekly Update NWS 11/07/92 add

2. AFR 36/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

21 February 1992

INTERNAL

Please note that this weekly update item is embargoed for 0001 hrs gmt Friday 6 March 1992. It is being sent out to a small number of selected African and specialist media by the IS press office.

The item accompanies a document Malawi: Prison conditions, cruel punishment and detention without trial (AI Index: AFR 36/03/91) which has been sent out to all sections this week.

EXTERNAL

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT FRIDAY 6 MARCH 1992

MALAWI: BRUTAL PUNISHMENTS AND UNEXPLAINED DEATHS IN PRISONS

Prisoners in Malawi are severely beaten, chained naked and denied food as part of a special punishment program. In a new report released today, Amnesty International says that many prisoners are believed to have died from being ill-treated or denied medical care. Not only is torture and ill-treatment routine, but by failing to investigate abuses or bring those responsible to justice, the government is allowing prison authorities to act with impunity.

Persistent criminal offenders are subjected to the "hard-core program" introduced in 1983. Towards the end of their sentences they are transferred to Dzeleka or Nsanje Prison, where they are forced to run the gauntlet of warders who beat them with clubs, whips and iron bars when they arrive. Those who survive are chained naked to the floors of their cells and fed one-quarter rations of food.

"The problem is so serious that we are urging the government immediately to close down the "hard-core" punishment centres and mount a full investigation," said the human rights organization.

Although Malawian law requires that inquests are held whenever a prisoner dies, in practice this rarely happens. The law obliges the prison authorities to return the bodies of dead prisoners to their families, but this does not happen either. Families of probable "hard-core" victims report having the prisoner's clothes returned to them without explanation.

Political detainees have also died from being ill-treated or denied medical care. Sylvester Phiri, an untried political detainee, died in Mikuyu Prison in November 1991, apparently from tuberculosis. He had not received any medical treatment. In July 1991, another untried political detainee in the same prison, Alec Kadango, died of malaria without receiving medical care. In 1990 a detainee died of a night-time asthma attack. For "security reasons" he had not been allowed to keep his inhaler in his cell.

In January 1992 Mary Sikwese was released from three years' detention without trial. She had been arrested for accusing the police of responsibility for the unexplained death in custody of her brother Fred Sikwese, a senior civil servant. There was no inquest after he died in March 1989 and his body was buried in the precincts of Maula Prison, Lilongwe.

Political detainees, like criminal prisoners, are subjected to various cruel punishments. They are kept in leg-irons and handcuffs in darkened cells for minor infringements of prison regulations. Often they are denied food and have cold water thrown over them. Prisoner of conscience Orton Chirwa, who was aged 72 at the time, was subjected to "cell punishment" in May 1991. He was put in leg-irons and handcuffs and made to squat with an iron bar behind his knees. The leg-irons and handcuffs were attached to the bar. He was kept in this position for two days and denied toilet facilities.

In a speech to the diplomatic corps in Lilongwe in January 1992, Life-President Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda denied Amnesty International's reports of the use of leg-irons in Malawian prisons, which he described as "quite disgusting". However, evidence gathered by Amnesty International indicates that not only are leg-irons widely used - in breach of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners - they are also systematically employed as a form of punishment. In another case documented by Amnesty International, a prisoner of conscience suffering from schizophrenia was kept continuously in leg irons for two months.

Amnesty International is calling on Life-President Banda to allow regular, independent access to Malawian prisons to ensure that punishment regimes and conditions of imprisonment conform to international standards.

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT FRIDAY 6 MARCH 1992

3. EUR 45/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

21 February 1992

INTERNAL

The delegation have taken this weekly update item with them to the Isle of Man and if necessary will hand it out to press. We are however trying to minimize press coverage as we do not wish to publicize the issues at this stage.

EXTERNAL

UNITED KINGDOM: AI SENDS DELEGATES TO ISLE OF MAN TO INVESTIGATE LEGAL SITUATION OF HOMOSEXUALS

Amnesty International is sending two delegates, a Belgian lawyer and researcher in international law and a member of staff of the International Secretariat, to visit the Isle of Man to investigate the legal situation of homosexuals there.

The Isle of Man and Gibraltar are the only territories in Western Europe where homosexual acts by consenting adults in private remain a criminal offence and the delegates will be gathering information on relevant law and practice. While the British Government in London retains responsibility for matters concerning defence and foreign affairs, the Isle of Man has considerable autonomy over its internal affairs - with the island's own parliament responsible for legislation on domestic matters. The government of the United Kingdom has pressed for the Isle of Man parliament to bring its legislation into accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. A legislative debate on the decriminalization of homosexuality, expected to begin shortly, has become the subject of renewed public attention in the wake of a series of recent arrests and charges for alleged homosexual acts in a public place.

At its International Council Meeting in Yokohama in 1991, Amnesty International expanded its mandate to include a call for the release of individuals who have been imprisoned solely because of their homosexuality, including the practice of homosexual acts in private between freely consenting adults. The organization is presently drawing up guidelines for the implementation of this decision. Amnesty International has for many years opposed the violation of the fundamental human rights of homosexuals through its work to stop torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the death penalty and extrajudicial execution, and by calling for the release as prisoners of conscience of people detained because of

their advocacy of homosexual equality.

In accordance with the normal policy and procedures for such a visit, Amnesty International's delegates are not authorized to make any public statements, and on their return will report to Amnesty International's International Executive Committee.

Weekly Update NWS 11/07/92 add

4. MDE 30/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

21 February 1992

TUNISIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT POLICE SEIZURE,
QUESTIONING OF LOCAL STAFF

Amnesty International has written to the Tunisian Minister of the Interior expressing concern about the police seizure of copies of the organization's annual report from the headquarters of its Tunisian section and the questioning of the section director in police custody.

The human rights organization has asked the government to clarify the circumstances of both the seizure and questioning.

The organization asked the government for assurances that today's police actions don't reflect any plans by the Tunisian government to limit the activities of the Tunisian section.

5. ASA 33/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

21 February 1992

PAKISTAN: AI CONCERNED ABOUT 12 KILLINGS

Amnesty International has received reports that in Pakistan up to 12 people may have been killed when security forces tried to stop a march of members of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front to the cease fire line between India and Pakistan.

The organization expressed its concern to the Government of Pakistan that excessive force may have been used by the security forces and further, that some of those killed may have been victims of extrajudicial executions. According to reports, at least two of those killed had been shot in the head, suggesting that they may have been specifically targeted by the security forces. Amnesty International is urging the government of Pakistan to initiate a full, independent and impartial inquiry into these killings to establish the circumstances in which they occurred and whether any of them were the result of unlawful or unnecessary use of lethal force by the security forces. The organization called on the government to make the terms of reference and findings of such an inquiry public at the earliest opportunity and to bring to justice any members of the security forces found to have committed human rights violations.

It further called on the government to ensure that all law enforcement officials are clearly instructed that in accordance with relevant international standards, lethal force may not be used except in genuine life-threatening circumstances.

Weekly Update NWS 11/07/92 add

6. MDE 28/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL

21 February 1992

ALGERIA: AT LEAST 5,000 POLITICAL ACTIVISTS NOW HELD IN ADMINISTRATIVE
DETENTION

Over 5,000 supporters of Islamic groups are currently detained in internment camps in Algeria according to statements by Ali Harun, Algerian Human Rights Minister and a member of the ruling High Council of State.

It appears that most of the 5,000 are now being held for questioning at the internment camps of Ould Fayet, Blida, Oran and Ain M'lila - previously used during the state of siege (June to September 1991) - but may then be sent to other camps in the Sahara desert. At least two of the desert camps are already in use, Wargla (used as a detention centre during the 1991 state of siege, now said to house detainees from eastern Algeria) and Reggane (site of the French atomic bomb tests in the 1950s, now said to house detainees from central Algeria). Three other desert camps at Adrar, In Salah and Ain Guezzam, are also reportedly being prepared to hold detainees.

All those detained are men. They are mostly suspected members or supporters of the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), Islamic Salvation Front, though members of the Algerian al-Nahda (Renaissance) party have also been arrested and may be among those interned. Families of those arrested were not informed where the detainees were being taken, and for several days did not have any information as to their whereabouts. However, the Algerian authorities have stated that lists of those detained and their places of detention will be available shortly and that within 10 days families and lawyers will be able to visit them.

The decree imposing the state of emergency, issued on 9 February, allows the Algerian Minister of the Interior to "place all persons whose activity may endanger public order in security centres (centres de sûreté)". No official regulations governing internment have yet been issued so there is, as yet, no time limit laid down and no right of appeal.