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Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 12 MARCH 1992

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 10/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Algeria, Cyprus and the IS database.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Please note - because of absences in the IS press office at a time when we are short-staffed anyway, we expect that there will be no news releases embargoed for the following weeks: 3 June, 17 June and 24 June 1992.

Yugoslavia - 19 March 1992

(New information)

Targeted news release/weekly update to accompany new document on torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings. The document has been posted out to section press officers individually and the news release will follow shortly - the IS press office will be sending this out only to a very limited list of media contacts and expect you will want to do the same.

CSCE - 23 March 1992 (Europe and North America only)

News release to accompany Finnish Section press conference on the day before the start of the Helsinki meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The IS press office will be mailing this news release only to European contacts, and Frank Johansson (Finnish Section press officer) will be making it available for the conference. European and North American press officers can use their own judgement about how they wish to deal with it. More information is contained in an internal item in Weekly Update NWS 11/08/92.

India - 25 March 1992

An international news release and questions and answers to go with a publication for the campaign against rape, torture and deaths in custody. The news release has been sent to you, the Q and A will arrive fairly shortly. A launch is planned for London.

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.

Togo - 8 April 1992

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

Sudan - 15 April

A document is expected to be ready for 1 April weekly mailing. It will be accompanied by a news item, either a news release or a weekly update which the IS press office will be sending out to press contacts in Africa and the Middle East. More details when they are confirmed.

Turkey - 7 May

A document on increasing extrajudicial executions in Turkey, accompanied by a news release.

China (Tibet) - 20 May 1992

A document and news release to go with a small-scale campaign. More information when we get it.

POSSIBLE NEWS INITIATIVES, STILL TO BE CONFIRMED

South Africa - date now possibly 13 May (New information)

The research team is planning a document, but as yet cannot give a definite date. It will have an international news release and probably a questions and answers - the date has still not been fixed, although it is now possibly 13 May.

Pakistan - possibly 28 May (New information)

A document and targeted news release on arrests in Sind. The date is still provisional, depending on whether the document can be finalised to tie in with printing schedules.

Israel/Lebanon - possibly 29 April (New information)

News release to accompany first detailed report on treatment and conditions of detainees in Khiam prison, south Lebanon.

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2. MDE 28/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL

12 March 1992

ALGERIA: AI REPRESENTATIVE VISITS ALGERIA

An Amnesty International representative is visiting Algeria this month for the first time since a State of Emergency was declared on 9 February 1992. She will be inquiring into matters relevant to the protection of human rights within Amnesty International's mandate.

Amnesty International's representative, a staff member at the organization's International Secretariat, will be meeting representatives of non-governmental organizations and others involved in the promotion and protection of human rights and will be seeking information about the current human rights situation in Algeria. In particular, she will be making inquiries into the workings of the State of Emergency, incidents in which people have been shot dead by security forces and the recent arrests of members of Islamic groups. The delegate will also inquire into the use of internment camps to detain opponents of the government.

In accordance with its normal policy, Amnesty International's representative will not be authorized to make public statements about the content of discussions on Algeria during the visit. Upon her return, she will report to Amnesty International's International Executive Committee.

Anyone requiring further information about Amnesty International's work in Algeria should contact the press office at Amnesty International's International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, telephone (44) (71) 413 5810.

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3. EUR 17/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

12 March 1992

INTERNAL

The following item has been used as an 'Advice to editors', AI-Index: EUR 17/01/92, which the research team has mailed to press in Cyprus only - it will not arrive until late next week. We will fax it to the Anatolian News Agency only on Wednesday 18 March - if you wish to use it for any press work, please wait until then so that the media in Cyprus have received it.

EXTERNAL

CYPRUS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS JAILING OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

Amnesty International has condemned the jailing of conscientious objector Sideris Georgiou Isidorou on 2 March, less than two months after the House of Representatives passed new legislation on conscientious objection.

Nicosia Military Court sentenced Siderios Georgiou Isidorou, a 35-year-old Jehovah's Witness, to four months' imprisonment after he refused on religious grounds to perform reservist exercises. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and is calling on the Cypriot authorities to release him immediately.

"We are particularly concerned that the jailing of Sideris Georgiou Isidorou comes so soon after the passing of the new legislation" Amnesty International said. The new legislation is due to come into force later this year.

Soon after the legislation was passed the worldwide human rights organization wrote to members of the Cypriot Government involved in the issue. It welcomed the recognition for the first time in Cypriot law of the right to have conscientious objections to military service but expressed its regret that the provisions of the new legislation do not meet international standards in a number of respects:

The 42-month alternative service it offers does not appear to be completely civilian in character and under civilian control, which would make it unacceptable to most conscientious objectors. Its very length, compared to that of 26 months for military service, is clearly intended as a punishment, taking into account the fact that conscientious objectors have also to perform alternative service for the equivalent of each reservist exercise. The United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament have all stated that alternative service should not be of a punitive nature.

In addition, the legislation appears only to recognize conscientious objectors on religious grounds. Amnesty International believes that conscientious objection should also be open to conscientious objectors on ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, political or similar grounds. Finally, Amnesty International expressed its concern that the right for people to switch to alternative service if they develop conscientious objections after joining the armed forces would be suspended during periods of emergency or general mobilization under the new legislation.

Amnesty International pointed out that it would consider as prisoners of conscience any people who were jailed for refusing to perform alternative service which does not meet the international standards. It concluded by saying, "We sincerely hope that this legislation is the start of a process towards granting conscientious objectors in Cyprus their full rights in accordance with the standards laid down by the European Parliament, Council of Europe and the United Nations."

Amnesty International is concerned that a further three men, Panikos Makri, Aristos Aristidou and Filippos Filippou, all of them Jehovah's Witnesses, will be tried during March and April for their conscientious objection.

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4. DOC 10/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

12 March 1992

INTERNAL

The following is principally for your information. However, if you have contacts in NGOs please let them know about our database on the GeoNet system and if you can think of other ways of advertising our database it would be most useful. GeoNet is widely used by other NGOs. If anyone needs to find out more about GeoNet, the contact address is:

Manchester Host
30 Naples Street
Manchester
M4 4DB
England
TEL: (44)-61-839-4212

EXTERNAL

AI DATABASE ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS GOES PUBLIC

The International Secretariat of Amnesty International has for the first time made its database of external materials available on a public electronic mail network.

The network used is GeoNet which is accessible to subscribers in 40 countries around the world. Amnesty International's database, AIDOC, is available to GeoNet users through an organization called the Manchester Host.

To carry out searches on Amnesty International's database, GeoNet users log into the Host system using their personal computer and a telephone link, and then they have access to a full list of Amnesty International's external documents from 1988 onwards.

The AIDOC database includes the index number, title, keywords and, in many cases, short summaries of all documents published by the International Secretariat of Amnesty International. The documents listed are AI publications, circulars, news releases and urgent actions, along with articles from the Amnesty International Newsletter and Amnesty International Annual Report entries. These can be searched through by country and topic.

Copies of the full text of all documents described on the AIDOC database can be obtained from the offices of the Amnesty International

sections, and a current address list of all sections is included on the database.

Users accessing AI bibliographic information through AIDOC will have to pay 25p per minute whilst connected to the database.

NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS

Due to new information received today, a weekly update item about Yugoslavia has been delayed - it will be sent to you on Monday. I have mailed a document, (EUR 48/13/92: "Yugoslavia: Further reports of torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings in war zones" - EMBARGOED FOR 001 HRS GMT, THURSDAY 19 MARCH), to you which goes with the above-mentioned weekly update item. The IS press office will be sending the item as an 'Advice to Editors' with the document to a selected number of news agencies. Apologies for the delay.

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Amnesty International
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1 Easton Street
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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

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DATE: 13 MARCH 1992

ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 10/92

Contained in this addition to the weekly update are external items on
Brazil and Azerbaydzhan.

1. AMR 19/WU 1/92 EXTERNAL

13 March 1992

BRAZIL: COURT ORDERS RETRIAL IN FRANCISCO 'CHICO' MENDES MURDER

On 29 February 1992 an Appeal Court in Brazil ordered a retrial of Darli
Alves da Silva, one of the men convicted of the December 1988 murder of the
rubber tapper union leader Francisco 'Chico' Mendes.

Rubber tapper union leader and grassroots environmentalist Chico
Mendes was assassinated on 22 December 1988. Local, state and federal
authorities moved quickly to investigate the crime and make arrests, amidst
intense international pressure and publicity. Investigations focused on
the Alves family, which had been repeatedly accused of acts of violence
against rural workers in three states. Family head Darli Alves da Silva and
sons Darci Alves and Oloci Alves were arrested and other members of the
family were investigated but not apprehended.

After many delays, legal manoeuvres and postponements, Darli Alves da
Silva and Darci Alves were tried for the murder of Chico Mendes on 12 to 15
December 1990. They were each convicted and sentenced to 19 years'
imprisonment. Darli Alves' conviction marked the first time that a
Brazilian court had convicted a landowner for ordering the murder of a
rural trade unionist.

The sentence was appealed by defence lawyers who claimed the trial was prejudiced by "external pressures" that amounted to an international campaign against landowners. On 29 February the Appeal Court of the state of Acre reportedly ruled, by a two-to-one vote, that there was insufficient evidence to convict Darli Alves da Silva and ordered a retrial. The conviction of Darli Alves da Silva's son, Darci Alves, accused of having fired the shots that killed Chico Mendes, was upheld.

Prosecution lawyers stated they would appeal to the Supreme Court against the Appeal Court's decision. They pointed out that the original trial was conducted according to international standards for fair trial and that the evidence against Darli Alves da Silva, including the testimony of several witnesses, was conclusive. The local prosecutor-general has requested that Darli Alves da Silva remains in custody pending the result of the appeal.

An aide to Brazil's Environment Secretary José Lutzenberger was quoted as saying that "this shows that jail is just for poor people who steal chickens. Very few landowners even end up there and those who do, don't stay long." According to press reports a spokesman at the Presidential Palace in Brasilia declined to comment on the ruling, saying only: "Under the laws of Brazil, the defendant has the right of appeal."

Amnesty International believes that the outcome of this trial and the manner in which judicial proceedings are conducted are of paramount importance for the protection of human rights in Acre and in rural areas throughout Brazil. In hundreds of other cases in which rural trade union leaders have been murdered in Brazil, the perpetrators have not been brought to justice. According to figures from the Comissao Pastoral da Terra (CPT), Pastoral Land Commission, 41 people were killed in incidents related to land disputes in 1991. By the end of the year no one had been convicted for those crimes. Amnesty International has pointed out that the persistent failure of the authorities to identify those responsible for such abuses and bring them to justice helps to create a climate of impunity that encourages further violations of human rights.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case closely.

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2. EUR 55/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

13 March 1992

AZERBAIDZHAN: AI DEPLORES HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Amnesty International is appealing to all those associated with the conflict in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh to ensure that international humanitarian and human rights principles are observed in the region. The organization deplores the suffering brought about by abuses committed in the context of the armed conflict there.

As a human rights organization with a limited mandate Amnesty International is specifically concerned about reports from conflict zones of extrajudicial executions and other deliberate and arbitrary killings of unarmed civilians, and of the torture or ill-treatment of people detained in connection with the fighting. The information available indicates that all sides to the conflict have been involved in such violations, and Amnesty International calls on all sides to protect non-combatants from all acts of reprisal and violence and to treat prisoners in their custody humanely. International human rights standards provide that the right to life and the right to be free from torture and ill-treatment must always be protected. The Geneva Conventions of 1949, applicable to all governments and opposition groups, provide that in situations of armed conflict, people taking no active part in the hostilities should always be protected from abuses including murder, torture and hostage-taking.

Recent reports of concern to Amnesty International include allegations that scores of non-combatants of Azeri origin were killed near the town of Khodzjali at the end of February, and that Armenian non-combatants died when a civilian helicopter was shot down on 3 March. Those who died near Khodzjali were said to have included women and children, and to have been killed deliberately and arbitrarily by Armenian paramilitary forces while attempting to leave the scene of fighting. Some bodies recovered were reportedly mutilated. Other Azeri non-combatants from Khodzjali allege they were taken hostage briefly before being exchanged for Armenian prisoners, and that while in the custody of Armenians they were beaten and otherwise ill-treated.

The helicopter which crashed is said to have been a civilian Mi-26 aircraft, crewed by military personnel but carrying 43 non-combatant Armenians attempting to leave Nagorno-Karabakh. It was reportedly brought down over the Kalbadzhar district of Azerbaydzhan by a heat-seeking missile fired by Azeri forces, with the loss of some 17 lives. Several people said to be non-combatant survivors of the crash have stated that the passengers and craft were civilian, and that the helicopter was deliberately fired on.

Amnesty International takes no position on territorial disputes. It is also aware of the often contradictory nature of allegations from Nagorno-Karabakh, and the difficulty of verifying them. However, allegations that non-combatants have been deliberately and arbitrarily killed, and ill-treated while in custody, have come from a number of different sources and are consistent as to the nature of the violations reported.

Amnesty International expressed its concern to Soviet and Azerbaydzhani officials last year over allegations that unarmed civilians had been killed deliberately without warning or attempts to apprehend them, and that prisoners had been ill-treated and tortured, during a security operation by Soviet troops and Azerbaydzhani special police in April and May 1991. In the light of further incidents the organization is currently appealing to the Presidents of both Armenia and Azerbaydzhani to exert all influence they are able to bring to bear on the situation in order to ensure the observance of international humanitarian and human rights principles in Nagorno-Karabakh.

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ADDITION 2 TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 10/92

Contained in this addition to the weekly update is an external item on Yugoslavia (see previous addition for further details).

1. EUR 48/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL

16 March 1992

YUGOSLAVIA: FURTHER REPORTS OF EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS AND DELIBERATE ARBITRARY KILLINGS

AI has called on the federal, Serbian and Croatian authorities to investigate all reports of extrajudicial executions or deliberate and arbitrary killings of unarmed civilians or captured combatants, as well as reports of the ill-treatment of prisoners detained in connection with the conflict and to bring those responsible for abuses to justice.

In a new document, the human rights organization provides information about abuses committed in the period between October 1991 and February 1992, including the killing of Croatian civilians by Serbian paramilitaries operating with, or in the wake of, the Yugoslav National Army (JNA). In one such incident captured Croatian villagers were used to clear a minefield, as a result of which 17 died. Amnesty International is also concerned about reports of the arbitrary arrest, killing or "disappearance" of members of the Serbian minority in Croatia by members of the Croatian security forces or Croatian paramilitaries. Amnesty International has also received accounts of the torture or ill-treatment of prisoners captured by the parties to the conflict. These include accounts by doctors who were among several thousand prisoners, including civilians, captured by the JNA after

the fall of Vukovar on 18 November 1991 and held in Sremska Mitrovica prison and in two improvised camps near Zrenjanin in the Vojvodina. The organization has also received reports of the torture and ill-treatment of prisoners detained by the Croatian authorities in Zadar, Gospic and Zagreb.

Amnesty International has urged all those involved in the conflict to ensure that international humanitarian standards are upheld and human rights protected. The organization has urged all parties to treat prisoners humanely and to release all those who have neither used nor advocated violence, and who have not been charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

On 3 January 1992 a United Nations-sponsored ceasefire came into force, which has significantly reduced armed conflict in Croatia. Amnesty International welcomes the fact that the United Nations peace-keeping force, shortly to arrive in Croatia, will include United Nations civilian police monitors who will monitor the work of local police forces and be responsible for investigating any complaints of discrimination or other abuses of human rights and of reporting any confirmed cases to the Chief of the United Nations Force in Croatia.