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**TO: PRESS OFFICERS**

**FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS**

**DATE: 18 FEBRUARY 1993**

**WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 11/93**

Contained in this weekly update are external items on China and El Salvador.

**NEWS INITIATIVES**

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES**

**\*Japan - 0500 hrs gmt, 17 March\***

Please note the embargo is confirmed for 0500 hrs gmt, 17 March for this document on refugee issues and we anticipate a high level of media interest in this news release.

**Chad - 21 April**

Campaign, document, news release, Q&A and ENR.

**TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES**

**Sudan - 19 February**

Weekly update item on mass killings, ethnic displacement and gross human rights violations. Please note that this document is going to be used for lobbying during the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

**Western Sahara - 23 February**

A document on arrests, "disappearances" and restrictions on freedom of expression and movement in Western Sahara - will be faxed/telexed/e-mailed to you tomorrow. There will be a weekly update item to go with it, which will be sent to you by Monday. This document will be handed out at the UN Commission on Human Rights and may raise some media interest. Apologies for the late notice.

### **Algeria - 2 March**

An embargoed document has been sent to section press officers by the Research Department to go with an item enclosed in a weekly update last week on human rights violations under the state of emergency.

### **Section Initiatives**

#### **French Section - European Press Officers' Meeting**

The second European Press Officers' meeting will take place in Paris this year. The registration forms have not arrived yet, but when they do please send them to Luisa de Soriano or Josette Debord at the French Section Press Office before the end of February. The date of this meeting is now fixed for 15 and 16 May as the majority of you asked for. It will be focused on two themes: Audiovisual work (production and TV experiences) and how to improve it; and the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. The French Section Press Office will send the program to all participants during the last week of February. Many thanks.

**2. ASA 17/WU 02/93 EXTERNAL**  
**18 February 1993**

**PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: HUNDREDS OF DISSIDENTS REMAIN DETAINED**

Hundreds of prisoners of conscience, including students, are still detained in China for taking part in the 1989 pro-democracy movement. Despite the release on parole on 17 February of Wang Dan and Guo Haifeng - two students held as prisoners of conscience since 1989 - only limited changes have occurred in China's treatment of its dissidents.

The governmental New China News Agency, commenting on 17 February on the release on parole of Wang Dan and Guo Haifeng, stated that they were "the last student leaders" held in connection with the 1989 movement. This is untrue. Liu Gang, a 28 year-old postgraduate physics student, has been held since 1989 in harsh conditions in a labour camp in the northern province of Liaoning where he is serving a six-year sentence. Zhang Ming, a history student from Shaanxi province, is serving a 10-year sentence, together with two fellow students, because he set up a group to study developments in the then Soviet Union. Chen Lantao, a 28 year-old student in marine biology from Tianjin, is serving an 18-year sentence because he made public speeches in his home city during the 1989 movement and after the Beijing massacre. They are but some of the many students known by Amnesty International to be held as prisoners of conscience.

Wang Dan, a 23 year-old student and a leader of the Tiananmen student movement, was due for release on 1 July 1993. Guo Haifeng's release was due to take place on 3 June 1993. Other students, including Liu Gang, still have to serve several years of their sentence.

Wang Dan and Guo Haifeng may remain under house arrest until their originally scheduled date of release - as happened in the case of Wang Xizhe, a prominent dissident released two weeks ago and who has been ordered to regularly report to the police. In addition, Wang Dan and Guo Haifeng were sentenced to a year's "deprivation of political rights" after their release: there is no indication that this has been dropped. People "deprived of political rights" do not enjoy the rights to freedom of speech, of expression, of assembly and association and the right to take part in demonstrations, which are all formally protected under Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution.

The release on parole of Wang Dan and Guo Haifeng is taking place during the annual session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, currently taking place in Geneva, where China's human rights record is coming under scrutiny.

Li Guiren, a newspaper editor, was released on medical bail on 18 February only after sustained international pressure on the Chinese authorities to release him. Li Guiren is barely able to eat and his family feared that he would be unable to survive the winter in prison. Li's father has written more than 200 letters to the authorities demanding a review of his son's case. None was ever answered.

In addition to pro-democracy activists, hundreds of members of unauthorized Roman Catholic or Protestant groups remain in prison in China. Hundreds of Tibetans, Uighurs, Kazakhs and Mongolians are also held in various "autonomous regions" for advocating political independence or cultural autonomy from China.

[corrected]

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3. AMR 29/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL

18 February 1993

**EL SALVADOR: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES AGAINST EXTENSION OF DEATH PENALTY**

Amnesty International is concerned that the Legislative Assembly in El Salvador is considering extending use of the death penalty. Members of the ruling ARENA party said they had presented the motion on the grounds that the death penalty would deter violent crime.

At present the death penalty is only applicable for crimes such as spying and treason, committed during international war. A constitutional reform to extend the death penalty was passed by the outgoing legislative assembly in April 1991. This would extend the death penalty to offences including murder, patricide and cases of robbery, kidnapping, rape and arson resulting in murder during peace time. However, constitutional reforms must be ratified by two consecutive legislative assemblies to become law in El Salvador. The current assembly, which took office in May 1991, is now being asked to ratify the 1991 reform.

The extension of the death penalty in El Salvador would be in violation of the American Convention on Human Rights - which states that the death penalty may not be extended to crimes for which it is not currently applicable. It also violates the Salvadorian Constitution whereby international treaties ratified by El Salvador are part of domestic law and no law may be passed to amend them. Provisions of the treaties take precedence over domestic law.

Although the motion has been presented to the Legislative Assembly by members of the ARENA Party, the Minister of Justice is reported to have expressed his opposition to the extension of the death penalty. The President of the Supreme Court and the Archbishop of San Salvador are also reported to have opposed the move in public statements.

Amnesty International conveyed its concerns in a letter to the president of the Legislative Assembly on 17 February. The organization is urging that all members of the assembly vote against the motion.