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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 12/93

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Western Sahara and Iran.

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

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 today. There is an item to go with it in this weekly update. 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 on human rights violations under the state of emergency has been sent to section press officers by the Research Department. To go with this is item: MDE 28/WU 01/93, in a weekly update NWS 11/10/93.

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. MDE 29/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR 23 FEBRUARY 1993**

MOROCCO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DENOUNCES NEGLECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN WESTERN SAHARA

Amnesty International today expressed concern at continuing human rights violations in Western Sahara and the failure of the present authorities to ensure that people are not detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of speech and movement.

The organization is seriously concerned that human rights guarantees under an Implementation Plan agreed by the United Nations (UN), in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), with the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front in 1991 have not been respected.

The Implementation Plan included a proposed referendum supervised by a UN monitoring body (MINURSO) to determine the future of the Western Sahara. Amnesty International takes no position either on the conflicting claims to the territory of Western Sahara or who should be eligible to vote in the proposed referendum. However, the organization is concerned that provisions for freedom of expression and the release of political prisoners laid down in the plan have not been respected.

Despite the existence of United Nations personnel on the ground, hundreds of people of Sahrawi origin have reportedly been arrested or otherwise harassed on suspicion of supporting Western Saharan independence or for participating in peaceful protests. Hundreds more Sahrawis who were arrested by members of the Moroccan security forces between 1975 and 1988 remain "disappeared", reportedly held in secret detention. Over 260 former "disappeared" released in 1991 continue to suffer restrictions on movement and freedom of speech. No inquiry has been made into how they were held for up to 16 years in secret detention without charge or trial and they are denied the relief, rehabilitation and compensation which is their due. Some of them have been rearrested.

In a five-page report, Amnesty International also expresses concerns about abuses by the Polisario Front, including detention of prisoners of conscience, long term incommunicado detention, torture and deaths in custody of suspected opponents in the Polisario camps in Tindouf.

Amnesty International calls on the Moroccan Government to ensure that all Sahrawis enjoy full rights of freedom of expression; to inform MINURSO of all places where members of the Sahrawi population are detained; and to cooperate with MINURSO in releasing all those illegally detained or detained on charges contrary to the freedom of expression or association. Amnesty International calls on the Polisario Front also to cooperate with MINURSO in releasing all prisoners of conscience. The organization urges the United Nations to ensure that the new mandate of MINURSO be amended to include the monitoring and investigation of any alleged violations of human rights; to deploy the civilian police monitors envisaged in the Implementation Plan; and to ensure that MINURSO has unrestricted access to all parts of Western Sahara and to all Sahrawis detained anywhere in Western Sahara, Morocco or the Polisario camps.

3. MDE 13/WU 01/93 INTERNAL FOR VERBAL RESPONSE ONLY
19 February 1993

The following is an update to Weekly Update item, Iran: Amnesty International concerned at reports of abduction of Iranian national in Turkey, AI Index: 13/WU 03/92, Weekly Update NWS 11/23/92 ADD, dated 12 June 1992. Please note that the item should only be used for verbal response to enquiries.

IRAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED AT REPORTS OF ABDUCTION OF IRANIAN NATIONAL IN TURKEY

Ali Akbar Ghorbani, a member of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran was abducted in Istanbul, Turkey, on 4 June 1992. His body was discovered in a forest near Yalova at the end of January 1993. Reports indicate that he had been subjected to severe torture before being murdered.

On 4 February 1993, the Turkish Interior Minister Ismet Sezgin said that an "Islamic fundamentalist group with Iranian links" had carried out three political killings in Turkey. He said that Islamic Action were responsible for the killings of Turkish journalist Cetin Emec and writer Turan Dursun in 1990, as well as Ali Akbar Ghorbani, an Iranian national. He told a news conference in Istanbul that police had arrested 19 members of the previously unknown Islamic Action group and they had been charged with the killings. He added, "The suspects have confessed that they have received military training at an official Iranian facility between Tehran and Qom. They said they were taught assassination techniques". He promised that the prisoners' allegations about Iranian training would be carefully investigated.

The Turkish Foreign Minister expressed hopes that the Iranian Government was not responsible for the killings, but that Turkey would pursue inquiries. The Iranian authorities have repeatedly denied any connection with such activities in Turkey or elsewhere.

Amnesty International is concerned that the above mentioned may have been victims of extrajudicial execution if the allegations of official Iranian links are found to be true. Amnesty International will continue to monitor developments.