
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 30/95

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 13 FEBRUARY 1995

AI INDEX: NWS 11/30/95
DISTR: SC/PO
NO OF WORDS: 1586

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **PAKISTAN** (this item is being sent to Pakistan and Indian media by the research team); **MEXICO** (reactive item, this is being targeted to Latin American media by the team)

INTERNAL - **URGENT NOTE ON EMBARGO FOR CAMPAIGN ON WOMEN**

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MEXICO: NEW ARMY INCURSIONS RAISE FEARS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

New incursions by the Mexican army into the southern state of Chiapas could renew armed conflict and give rise to torture and other gross human rights violations, Amnesty International said today, as it called on President Ernesto Zedillo to ensure full respect for human rights.

"Torture of prisoners to force confessions is a widespread practice of the Mexican security forces," Amnesty International said today. "We are seriously concerned those arrested and those facing detention could be tortured following the recent army incursions."

Amnesty International is investigating a number of unconfirmed reports of summary executions, arbitrary arrests and torture carried out by members of the Mexican army and the federal judicial police in the context of the latest military operations against the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), or Zapatista National Liberation Army, in the southern state of Chiapas.

Army incursions have been reported in the towns of Larráinzar, Simojovel, Morelia and several other areas. The military operations in Chiapas, which have been shrouded in secrecy, are reportedly planned to last five days.

Fresh reports of arrest warrants and intimidation against political activists -- including Amado Avendeño Figueroa, a runner-up for the August 1994 governorship for Chiapas -- and members of non-governmental organizations in Chiapas and other Mexican states have increased the organization's concerns about their safety.

Widespread gross human rights violations by members of the army were reported during the beginning of the Chiapas conflict in January 1994. The most frequent victims of human rights violations have been impoverished Indian peasants. Amnesty International is concerned that the latest developments might lead to further widespread human rights violations in Chiapas and elsewhere.

Those latest developments followed President Ernesto Zedillo's announcement on 9 February this year that he had ordered the arrest of top EZLN leaders -- marking an end to the on-going peace negotiations. On 8 February, at least eight alleged EZLN's members were arrested. Dozens of others face arrest warrants, including the man known as **Sub-Comandante Marcos**, the movement's leader.

Amnesty International strongly appeals to the Mexican authorities for the implementation of the organization's recommendations -- included in a memorandum sent to President Ernesto Zedillo towards the end of 1994 -- particularly the immediate and effective end of impunity, and ending the practice of torture.

Background

Over the past year, Amnesty International has documented scores of cases of serious human rights violations by the Mexican army, including summary executions of prisoners, arbitrary arrest and torture of civilians and "disappearances". For their part, the EZLN took hostages who were later released unharmed.

While welcoming the 1994 peace negotiations between the Mexican government and the EZLN, Amnesty International had been increasingly concerned about the prevailing impunity for human rights violations reported in Chiapas during the armed conflict and thereafter. A year later, none of those responsible have been brought to justice.

The 1994 peace negotiations lasted until the end of the year, when new armed clashes between the Mexican army and the EZLN were feared. An Amnesty International delegation visited Chiapas in early January 1995 to carry out research into recent reports of human rights violations and to confirm the prevalence of total impunity for perpetrators.

In meetings held with government representatives during its visit to Mexico, Amnesty International welcomed the announcement of a prompt renewal of peace talks between the EZLN and the Mexican government. The organization insisted that, within the context of those talks, the issue of human rights should be given the highest priority.

The renewal of peace negotiations was announced on 15 January 1995, and on 17 January 1995 the EZLN's announced an indefinite cease-fire. Amnesty International continued to call for full consideration of human rights issues in the negotiations, including impunity.

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AI INDEX: ASA 33/WU 02/95
13 FEBRUARY 1995

PAKISTAN: PERSISTENT PATTERNS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE UNDER THE PPP GOVERNMENT

Pakistan security forces continued to torture and rape prisoners and people in detention during the first 15 months of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government despite the party's pre-election promises to restore respect for human rights, Amnesty International said in a recently published report.

"The kinds of human rights violations that the PPP promised to end are still rife," Amnesty International said. "Prisoners and detainees continue to be beaten, kicked, blindfolded, raped, and subjected to electric shocks and cigarette burns."

The human rights organization said the new government has still not taken steps to end the widespread practice of holding prisoners incommunicado and in unacknowledged detention, which can often set the stage for torture. Prisoners are kept in places not officially designated as detention centres and children are being chained all day for years in some religious schools.

During a fact-finding visit in November last year, Amnesty International's researchers saw first hand a dramatic example of the treatment meted out in Pakistan. A man picked up during an army and police raid on the streets in Karachi was beaten on his back with a wooden stick for 10 minutes. When he was then questioned by a man in army uniform, another man kept hitting his face with a one-foot long rubber tube.

In other cases, torture comes to light when victims die in custody. During the past 15 months at least 67 people died, allegedly as a result of torture; 16 of them in jails. The police often try to hide the truth by claiming that prisoners had committed suicide or that they had died in armed encounters. However, eye-witness accounts and circumstantial evidence, including post-mortem reports, support the allegations of family members of victims that they died after torture.

In addition, another 35 people were reportedly extrajudicially executed. Several people also "disappeared" in custody without their relatives being able to establish their whereabouts.

Those in authority who are alleged to have tortured and killed almost always do so with impunity. Victims and victims' families find it difficult to file complaints with the police and face threats and retaliation by the authorities when they try to do so. Consequently, trials of police, army personnel and prison staff are rare; convictions rarer still and in some cases convictions are not enforced.

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URGENT -- EMBARGO FOR CAMPAIGN ON WOMEN

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE QUESTIONS ASKED BY SENDING AN EMAIL OR FAX TO ANDROULLA AT THE IS PRESS OFFICE BY 16 FEBRUARY

At the International Press Officers meeting held this past weekend, there was discussion about the embargo date and time for the campaign on women.

Many of the sections present have planned their press conferences for 7 March to get coverage on 8 March, and have requested that the embargo date be set for 7 March. Could you please let us know if you would prefer 7 or 8 March for the embargo date.

There was also discussion about whether there should be an embargo date and time, or simply an embargo date. There were differing views on this issue.

On the one hand, many sections felt that media work needs to be timed in a way that is appropriate for their national media, usually involving press conferences on the morning of 7 March. Since the spoken word at press conferences cannot be embargoed, these sections felt it was more realistic to allow sections to release the report at the time of their press conference.

On the other hand, some sections felt that not having an embargo time would lead to confusion in the media about when the report was being released, and the embargo would de facto be set by the first section to launch the report. It was felt this could undermine their efforts to attract media to their press conferences/media events.

For the international media serviced by the IS, primarily international wire agencies and radio and television networks, a fixed time is necessary since they operate in all time zones.

The issue of embargo times has been discussed for years amongst press officers, and the difficulties posed by one embargo time are clear. We would like section press officers to let us know which of the two options they prefer.

If the majority would like an embargo time, the practice will be as usual. If the majority would simply like an embargo date, we would ask sections to make this clear to their national media and ensure that the information they release is not given to international media or media serviced by other sections who may be holding their media event at a different time. The IS would notify the international media that sections will be releasing material at different times, and would release this information to international media at midnight on the embargo date.

The majority view at the press officers meeting was to simply have an embargo date, rather than time, and this will likely be the decision taken unless enough sections express a strong desire for an embargo time.

If we do have just an embargo date for this launch, we will review the approach afterwards to see whether it has been effective or has caused problems for a significant number of sections.