

AI Index: NWS 11/37/92

Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 1278

Amnesty International

International Secretariat

1 Easton Street

London WC1X 8DJ

United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 16 SEPTEMBER 1992

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 37/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Chad and "disappearances" and political killings.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES

South Africa **PLEASE NOTE**

(New information)

We have not written a weekly update on the killings at Ciskei in South Africa. There is however an Urgent Action (UA 286/92, AI Index: AFR 53/19/92) which was sent out last week. Please use this in response to any media queries.

Sudan - 23 September

(New information)

The research team is currently working on a brief document about human rights violations in Juba. We expect a weekly update item to accompany the document, which the IS will send out to media, and are considering some kind of action, possibly a RAN, as well. We are aiming for a date of 23 September and encourage as many sections as possible to seek publicity for the weekly update on this date.

We expect to send you the weekly update item later this week or next week. If you need the document, please contact the IS.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Indigenous Peoples' Campaign - 7 October

Please see the item sent in an addition to last week's Weekly Update.

Myanmar - 28 October

A document and news release on Myanmar, to go with an action to coincide with the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Turkey - 11 November **PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE**

PLEASE NOTE that the embargo on this news release and document has been changed. We will not be issuing a news release in the week of 3 November because of the US presidential elections, which will probably take up a lot of media space around the world.

The document to go with the news release and action, Turkey: Walls of glass (AI Index: EUR 44/75/92), has been sent in the Weekly Mailing. Unfortunately it has been printed without an embargo - the document is nevertheless embargoed for 11 November and should not be used before then.

The document and news release go with a section level action about a wide range of human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Children/AI week - 21 October

A targeted news release on children to go with a Focus article in October.

2. AFR 20/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
16 September 1992

CHAD: VISIT OF AI DELEGATION

Three Amnesty International representatives are visiting Chad from 22 to 29 September 1992. The representatives are led by Ahmed Othmani, a member of Amnesty International's International Executive Committee, who is accompanied by two members of Amnesty International's International Secretariat.

The representatives expect to hold discussions with Chadian government and security officials about human rights issues, and also to meet Chadian human rights groups and others to collect information about recent human rights violations. Following their visit, Amnesty International's representatives will report on their findings to Amnesty International's International Executive Committee.

Amnesty International's concerns in Chad include widespread political arrests, torture and "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions. Since 1991 forces loyal to the government of President Idriss Déby have reportedly been responsible for the extrajudicial execution of several hundred unarmed civilians and captured rebels, especially during counter-insurgency operations and reprisal attacks on people accused of sympathising with rebels. Dozens of people are reported to have "disappeared" while in the custody of security forces. There are fears that those who "disappeared" may have been killed.

More than 1,000 people have been arrested for political reasons and detained, mostly for short periods, since President Déby came to power in December 1990. Most of them, including more than 200 who were forcibly returned to Chad in early 1992 from Nigeria, were subjected to severe beatings, torture and other forms of ill-treatment while in custody, and some are known to have died as a result. No-one arrested for political reasons since December 1990 is known to have been brought to trial or had their case examined by a court of law.

In October 1991 four people who had been convicted of criminal offences and sentenced to death by a military court were publicly executed. The same court sentenced two members of the security forces to death in August 1992. Defendants convicted by the court have no right of appeal.

An Amnesty International delegation last visited Chad in March 1991. The visit took place a few months after the overthrow of former President Hissein Habré whose government was responsible for thousands of extrajudicial executions and thousands of "disappearances". During that visit, Amnesty International urged the new government to take steps to prevent a recurrence of such violations, in particular to end the practice of secret or incommunicado detention of suspected government opponents, which facilitated extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" under the previous government.

Weekly Update NWS 11/37/92

3. ACT 33/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
16 September 1992

INTERNAL

The Dutch Section hosted a conference on "disappearances" and political killings on 4 to 6 September 1992, entitled Elimination and Terror, in preparation for the planned campaign next year. At the end of the conference a Declaration was presented to the press which called, among other things, for a new high-level office for human rights in the United Nations.

This proposal is one the IS has been considering for some time and which we intend to develop further and pursue in the context of the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna next year. At this stage the proposal is still in the early stages and it is the proposal of the conference (which was external and not a formal AI body) rather than of Amnesty International.

This item gives a little more information about the proposal and can be used by sections to respond to any queries.

EXTERNAL

"DISAPPEARANCES" AND POLITICAL KILLINGS: CONFERENCE CALLS FOR UN OFFICE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

An international conference hosted by Amnesty International has called for a new, high-level office for human rights within the United Nations (UN).

The international conference on "disappearances" and political killings was held in the Netherlands and 140 delegates from around 50 countries took part. They considered the worldwide problems of "disappearances" and political killings - in past decades more than a million people have been killed or have "disappeared" at the hands of government forces and tens of thousands more have been killed by opposition groups in countries from every region of the world.

The conference called on governments to tackle the problem, both at home and in their dealings with other governments, and looked at ways human rights organizations can press for an end to the killings and "disappearances".

The conference also looked at the role of intergovernmental organizations. It called for a new high-level office for human rights within the United Nations, led by a single individual with sufficient authority, resources and personnel to be a focal point for UN action and information on human rights.

"Serious violations of human rights, such as killings and "disappearances", require a rapid and more comprehensive response by the UN," said a spokesperson for the conference. "The Commission on Human Rights and its Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities only meet for a few weeks each year. Other important UN human rights mechanisms, such as the Commission's thematic working groups and its Special Rapporteurs each focus on a different and specific type of violation.

"What we need is someone with authority who can act quickly and effectively when human rights violations such as "disappearances" and political killings occur. Human rights are violated every day of the year, not just when UN human rights bodies are sitting."

Amnesty International now plans to develop this recommendation of the conference in more detail as part of the organization's preparations for the planned UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna next year.

No. of words: 1458

Amnesty International

International Secretariat

1 Easton Street

London WC1X 8DJ

United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 18 SEPTEMBER 1992

ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 37/92

Contained in this addition to the weekly update are external items on India, Sudan and Hong Kong.

1. ASA 20/WU 05/92 EXTERNAL
18 September 1992

INDIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES CALLS FOR IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS

Amnesty International welcomes recent debate within the Indian government about improving human rights in the country, but is urging the government to make sure that any changes are effective.

At a conference of Chief Ministers of all India's states on 14 September, the Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao expressed his determination that human rights violations in India should not be tolerated and said that the government will take concrete steps to protect human rights - especially those of the most vulnerable groups.

Amnesty International is encouraged by the conference's resolution to deal firmly and quickly with crimes against people in custody after the Prime Minister and the Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan emphasized the need to hold officials involved fully and promptly accountable. Amnesty International also welcomed the government's earlier decision to respond to the specific allegations of human rights violations described in Amnesty International's latest report on India, published in March 1992.

Amnesty International is keenly interested in proposals that legislation concerning custodial deaths may be strengthened and that a human rights commission will be established in India. The work of such a commission can obviously best be set by human rights experts in India. However, such a commission could give an important focus to the need to halt human rights violations in India and also enhance the protection of human rights - provided it is made into an effective instrument to protect human rights in India.

Among other means, the effectiveness of such a commission would be enhanced through the appointment to the commission of individuals of known impartiality, independence and integrity; by providing it with a proper legal foundation and clear mandate; by granting it full powers to initiate and conduct investigations, including powers to require the attendance of witnesses and production of documents; by equipping it with sufficient financial and other resources to enable it to carry out its functions throughout the country in a speedy and effective manner; and by ensuring that its work is conducted in an open and accessible manner with full public accountability.

To ensure the effectiveness of any such human rights commission, a commitment will also be required on the part of the government, both at central and state level, whatever findings and recommendations the commission may make.

However, in addition to the creation of a human rights commission, concrete measures must also be taken at the central and state level if custodial violence is to be halted in India. Full impartial inquiries by an independent authority have only been conducted into a handful of the 415 specific reports of custodial deaths listed in Amnesty International's March report. Legal safeguards providing for mandatory inquiries by a magistrate have not been followed in many cases, the families of many victims continue to be denied access to police information reports, post mortem and other reports and in less than a dozen of the 415 cases are those allegedly responsible for causing deaths of people in their custody known to have been sentenced to imprisonment.

Amnesty International continues therefore to urge the Indian government to implement specific recommendations made by Amnesty International in its March 1992 report, which set out a ten point program of steps needed to halt torture in India.

2. AFR 54/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
18 SEPTEMBER 1992

INTERNAL

This item accompanies a short document Sudan - Deaths and detentions: the destruction of Juba (AI Index: AFR 54/26/92) which will be faxed to most sections on Monday 21 September.

There is also a rapid response action in connection with the document and one of the key priorities is publicity. The IS will be sending the item to international media on Wednesday 23 September for immediate release and press officers are also urged to send this item out to media on that date.

EXTERNAL

SUDAN: DEATHS AND DETENTIONS AS JUBA IS DESTROYED

A grave human rights and humanitarian crisis has developed in the southern Sudanese city of Juba, now virtually sealed to the outside world, Amnesty International said today.

"Government forces are reported to have deliberately killed at least 300 unarmed civilians and prisoners and to have arrested hundreds of others," said the human rights organization. "Many of those detained appear to have "disappeared" and, with reports of bodies seen floating in the White Nile, there is considerable concern that detainees have been secretly and extrajudicially executed."

In a three-page report released today the human rights organization describes a dramatic deterioration in the human rights situation in Juba since June this year.

The executions have followed intense fighting between government forces besieged in Juba and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). After government forces regained control of one suburb in early July, they are reported to have killed at least 200 civilians during house to house search operations looking for SPLA troops.

There are reports of soldiers stopping civilians in the streets, interrogating them and then shooting them. On 16 July two women and a man were reportedly deliberately killed while they were collecting firewood.

Hundreds of southern Sudanese soldiers, policemen and prominent civilians have been arrested, apparently on suspicion of sympathising with the SPLA.

"With reports of night-time executions and torture from various interrogation centres in the city, there is real fear for the safety of these prisoners," said Amnesty International.

The army has burned down some of the most densely populated housing areas of Juba to create free-fire zones. As a result, more than 100,000 people are reported to be squatting, many in appalling conditions and without shelter from the seasonal rains, near the old commercial centre of the city.

"The Sudanese Government is allowing its forces to exercise a flagrant disregard for human rights," Amnesty International said. "The government has expelled foreigners and restricted access to the city. It appears to be trying to hide the excesses of the army and security authorities."

Amnesty International is calling on the government to take immediate action to end human rights violations. This includes issuing orders that the torture and killing of prisoners and unarmed civilians will not be tolerated and taking action against all soldiers and security officials alleged to be responsible for such abuses.

3. ASA 19/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
18 SEPTEMBER 1992

INTERNAL

Please draw this item to the attention of your refugee coordinators.

EXTERNAL

TWO CHINESE ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN HONG KONG ACCEPTED BY CANADA

Amnesty International welcomes the decision of the Canadian authorities to accept for resettlement two Chinese refugees, Liu Yijun and Lin Lin, who would otherwise have faced forcible return from Hong Kong to China. This follows several weeks during which lawyers, Amnesty International and others called on the Hong Kong authorities to reverse their decision to forcibly return the two to China.

Amnesty International welcomes the eventual outcome in this case but remains concerned that the Hong Kong government decided to return the asylum-seekers to China. Amnesty International believes that the case illustrates important deficiencies in the way that Chinese asylum-seekers are dealt with in Hong Kong, in particular that the authorities do not give reasons why their asylum claims have been rejected, making it impossible to appeal effectively against the decision.

Amnesty International was concerned that, if returned to China, Liu Yijun and Lin Lin would be at grave risk of imprisonment as prisoners of conscience and possibly torture. The organization made its concerns known directly to the Hong Kong authorities on several occasions, including a direct intervention to the Governor of Hong Kong, calling on the Hong Kong authorities not to send the two women back to China. The Hong Kong authorities, however, stated that the decision to remove them must stand and refused to disclose the reason for this decision to Amnesty International or to the asylum-seekers themselves.

On 5 September, when expulsion seemed imminent, lawyers acting on behalf of the two women obtained a judge's ruling asking the authorities not to proceed with the removal pending the lawyers' application for leave to seek judicial review of the decision to remove them. Before the judge could hear the case on 16 September it was announced that Liu Yijun and Lin Lin had been accepted for resettlement in Canada.

Amnesty International continues to be concerned about the procedures followed in Hong Kong to deal with asylum-seekers from China. The organization believes that the Hong Kong authorities should ensure that asylum-seekers are told of the reasons for any decision to refuse their request for protection, and have an effective right of appeal against such decisions.