
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 81/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - CYPRUS, BULGARIA

PLEASE NOTE: A report on Kosovo: "Police violence against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province", AI Index: EUR 70/06/94, was accidentally sent out to international correspondents in Yugoslavia by the research team. The document is not yet with sections and will be sent in the Weekly Mailing of 27 April. If you get media queries on this report, or need the report quickly, please contact Joanna Duchesne, Tel: +44 71 413 5683.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Hong Kong - 0600 hrs gmt, 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICES 71/94 AND 36/94

Trade Unionists - 29 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

****Burundi - 17 May**** - PLEASE NOTE: Change of launch date to 17 May for start of Burundi Week. SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94

****China - 1 June****

Document and news release for fifth anniversary of Tiananmen Square Massacre - prisoners of conscience still detained.

****Pakistan - 29 June**** - Document and News release on the increase of death sentences for blasphemy. We will let you know when the report is ready to be sent out.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Israel & OT CAT - 22 April - SEE NEWS SERVICES 79/94 AND 53/94

****China - 5 May****

Document and news service item with new figures on death penalty in China. Document is being sent in the Weekly Mailing of 27 April. News service item should also be sent out then.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 7 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

German Section - The coverage received so far has been fairly good. The section distributed their own news release, entitled "Colombia: Presidential elections in an time of political violence" (translation). The national press published some brief and uninformative articles and other longer ones covering the different points of the news release. There was one interview on the radio, and according to the section the campaign launch did not receive any TV coverage.

On 17 March, the section had arranged a meeting between the AI lawyers' group in Berlin and Lourdes Castro García, but she was unable to attend the meeting. On 18 March the section's Colombia Coordinating Group held a press conference where Lourdes Castro spoke about the human rights and political situation in Colombia.

The day of the campaign launch coincided with a "South America Day" held by the German Foreign Office. The Colombia co-group were there and spoke to the member of the government who works on Colombia and arranged a later meeting between Lourdes Castro and the Foreign Office.

The German Press Officer believes that the launch would have received more coverage had it not been for the forthcoming presidential elections and therefore expects a second wave of coverage around the time of the elections which have been postponed till the 29 May. For example, the correspondent in South America for the German TV channel 2 (ZDF) has expressed interest in doing a news item on Colombia during the election campaigns/elections.

Austrian Section - The campaign launch was covered in the most important Austrian newspapers but in quite brief articles. However, the launch received very good coverage in a widely watched weekly news programme on Austrian TV, that made extensive use of our campaign ENR, which was highly praised by the Austrian Press Officer.

On 7 April, Lourdes Castro visited Austria and spoke at a press briefing. IPS was present at the briefing and made a special report on Colombia. There was a radio interview with Lourdes Castro. Altogether the coverage received in the Austrian media has been OK.

Spanish Section - The section distributed the news release to hundreds of journalists and personally contacted many of them, by phone or fax, sending ENRs and copies of the Colombia report, etc. In view of the section's efforts, the Spanish Press Officer finds the coverage received disappointing.

The embargo time (15 March, 5 pm) was bad for the Spanish media as there were four important sports events on TV that evening, because of which a number of TV and radio news programmes were omitted or shortened. The campaign was covered on Radio Nacional in a very short news item, which included a brief interview with Rafael Barrios and comments by the Colombian Minister of Defence, Rafael Pardo in response to the Amnesty report. The most important newspapers covered the launch on the 16 March in short articles and a few radio and TV stations mentioned the campaign.

The Spanish news agency, EFE covered the campaign twice; on 15 March, in a good feature story and on 16 March in a smaller item which reported the Procurador de Derechos Humanos of the Colombian government as saying that part of AI's report was true.

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**AI INDEX: EUR 17/WU 01/94
22 APRIL 1994**

CYPRUS: IMPRISONMENT OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS TO MILITARY SERVICE CONTINUES

Amnesty International yesterday wrote to President Glafcos Clerides of Greece calling for the release of all conscientious objectors imprisoned for refusing to perform military service.

The human rights organization said the continued imprisonment of conscientious objectors to military service in Cyprus ignores resolutions and recommendations of the United Nations and the Council of Europe. "We consider them to be prisoners of conscience and, as such, they should be immediately and unconditionally released," said Amnesty International.

In its letter, Amnesty International detailed the cases of three conscientious objectors, Nikos Alekou Paisi, Sotiris Christou Anastasiadis and Omiros Andreou Constantinou, all Jehovah's Witnesses, who are currently imprisoned as prisoners of conscience.

The letter also detailed the cases of three other Jehovah's Witness conscientious objectors, Theocharis Theoklis Theocharidis, Pelopidas Georgiou Nikolaou and Loukas Andreou Hatsipanayis, who are due to come to trial in the coming month. The three, if convicted, will be prisoners of conscience serving prison sentences for the second time for the same offence. One of them, Theocharis Theoklis Theocharidis is 53 years old and reportedly has very poor eyesight and a bad heart condition, so should be exempted from military service in any case.

Amnesty International reiterated its appeals to the Government of Cyprus to provide a civilian service of comparable length to military service for conscientious objectors. Legislation passed in 1992, provides an alternative civilian service that lasts 1.6 times as long as military service, which Amnesty International believes is punitive in length. Furthermore, in order to do the alternative service, citizens have to enlist in the army first, which goes against the conscientiously held beliefs of all conscientious objectors.

Amnesty International believes that the right to opt for alternative civilian service should also be available to serving conscripts and reservists, who may develop conscientious objections in the course of their military service.

In line with United Nations Commission on Human Rights Resolutions, Amnesty International considers that conscientious objection to military service is a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

"By failing to provide a non-punitive civilian alternative service for conscientious objectors and by imprisoning them, the Government of Cyprus is violating conscientious objectors' right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion", said the human rights organization.

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AI INDEX: EUR 15/WU 03/94
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BULGARIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE POLICE OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

Amnesty International is urging the authorities to ensure that police abide by international human rights standards at tomorrow's ethnic Macedonian commemorative assembly, following the violent events which overtook the assembly last year.

The commemorative assembly at Rozhen Monastery is an annual event, traditionally organized by OMO "Ilinden" (United Macedonian Organization "Ilinden") to commemorate the death of Jane Sandanski, a local hero of the struggle against Ottoman rule at the turn of the century.

On 24 April 1993, dozens of ethnic Macedonians, many of them members of OMO "Ilinden", were ill-treated by police officers in Lozenitsa and Spatovo after attempting to visit Rozhen Monastery.

"Special police units beat them with truncheons and rifle butts; they dragged people from their cars and knocked them to the ground", Amnesty International said. "We are concerned that the apparently unprovoked attack by officers of the special police units on the people who gathered in Lozenitsa and Spatovo represented a flagrant violation of international human rights standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bulgaria has acceded."

Amnesty International is particularly concerned by the reported statement from the Regional Security Service of Blagoevgrad that the police are undertaking "all appropriate measures to surround the area around the Rozhen Monastery on 23 April and to prevent the OMO "Ilinden" assembly from taking place".

Three ethnic Macedonians are already reported to have been detained in Blagoevgrad while peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. On 15 April, Stoyan Machkarov, Khristo Yanev and Lubomir Vasilev were reportedly arrested by members of the Regional Security Service of Blagoevgrad and charged with putting up posters to announce Saturday's assembly. All three were allegedly beaten while in the police station before being released that day.

Amnesty International considers their detention and alleged ill-treatment to be a violation of the ICCPR. As a State Party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Bulgaria is bound to initiate a prompt and impartial investigation wherever there is evidence that torture or other ill-treatment has occurred.

Amnesty International has written to Zhelyu Zhelev, the President of Bulgaria, urging him to initiate an independent and impartial inquiry into the alleged beatings in Blagoevgrad, to make public its findings and to bring to justice anyone responsible for human rights violations.

The human rights organization has still not received any reply to its letter of July 1993, to Minister of the Interior, Viktor Mikhaylov, that expressed its concern at the police violence at last year's assembly. The human rights organization called on the Bulgarian Government to initiate an independent and impartial inquiry into the alleged ill-treatment of people in Lozenitsa and Spatovo, to make public its findings and to bring to justice all those found responsible. Amnesty International is not aware whether such an investigation took place.

The human rights organization is urging President Zhelev to ensure that the police in the area of Rozhen Monastery on 23 April abide by relevant international human rights standards including UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

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