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Mexican women live in fear

At 10.15pm on 19 February 2001, residents living close to a piece of wasteland near an assembly plant in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, called the police emergency services to alert them that a young woman, apparently naked, was being beaten and raped by two men in a car. It was more than an hour later, after a second call to the police, that a patrol car finally arrived at the scene. The car was no longer there.

Four days earlier, the mother of Lilia Alejandra García reported the disappearance of her 17-year-old daughter. At 7.30pm the previous evening her work colleagues saw her walking towards an empty unlit lot, near to the factory where she worked, to catch the lorry that would take her home. She never arrived.

On 21 February, the body of a young woman was found on wasteland near to where the emergency call had been made. She was covered with a blanket and showed signs of physical and sexual violence. The cause of her death was given as asphyxia as a result of strangulation. The young woman was identified by her parents as Lilia Alejandra. The forensic report concluded that she had died a day and a half previously and that she had been held in captivity for at least five days before her death.

The identity of the woman who had been attacked on 19 February was never established nor was any investigation carried out into whether there was any connection between this incident and the abduction of Lilia Alejandra or any other case. The authorities never investigated the failure of the emergency services to respond in time to the calls. The wasteland near the assembly plant remains unlit.

In the last 10 years, more than 300 women have been killed in the cities of Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, many, like Lilia Alejandra, following sexual assault but others as a consequence of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. Others have disappeared without trace or explanation and their families fear that they too have been abducted and killed. The women are mainly young, many work in the assembly plants that dominate the local economy, and live in poor, marginalized communities.

The authorities have repeatedly failed to take adequate steps to prevent, investigate and punish many of these murders. They have failed to put in place effective public policies in the areas of justice, public security, health and education to end this pattern of discrimination and violence against women.

Doubts exist about the fairness of procedures used to investigate these crimes after repeated reports of the use of torture to extract confessions from those detained as suspects. The detentions, heralded by the authorities as the solution to the killings, have failed to stop them. Local human rights organizations and relatives have repeatedly raised concerns about the investigations which has resulted in smear campaigns and harassment against them.

In the meantime, fear stalks the streets of Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, while the families of the young women who have been abducted or murdered are left to grieve the loss of their mothers, daughters or sisters in the knowledge that the pattern of

negligent investigations may allow those responsible to evade justice.

See AI's report, "*Intolerable killings – Mexico: 10 years of abductions and murder of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua*" (AMR 41/026/2003).

Thousands of students arrested in Iran

In the last three weeks of June there were large demonstrations in Tehran, reflecting mounting political and social tension in Iran. The demonstrations were led by students and were generally peaceful. Around 4,000 people were reportedly arrested, up to 2,000 of whom were still held in mid-July. At least 65 have been charged, but the charges have not been made public.

The demonstrations were initiated by a protest outside student dormitories on 10 June by about 80 students in the Amir Abad area of Tehran. The students, fearing the impact of higher tuition fees, demonstrated against draft proposals to privatize universities in Iran and were joined by local residents. A US-based Iranian-owned radio station opposed to the Iranian government encouraged support for the students. The demonstrations escalated, spreading to other cities, and became increasingly politicized.

Organized groups of plain clothed supporters of religious leaders opposed to political and social reform attacked demonstrators, while police intervened to end the clashes. As the demonstrations grew, units of the police's Special Forces were deployed to disperse demonstrators. There were reports that the Special Forces permitted some plain clothed groups to attack peaceful demonstrators and that, in some instances, excessive force was used to break up the demonstrations. Some protesters were attacked by groups of plain clothed militants on motorcycles wielding iron bars and others were reportedly abducted.

Four years ago in July 1999, there was a similar pattern of violence. Demonstrations by students protesting against growing curbs on freedom of expression and association were attacked by organized groups of plain clothed militants. As in June 2003, the Special Forces posted at the scene failed to intervene to protect the students. Dozens of people were injured, hundreds arrested and at least one killed. Many of those arrested faced torture and ill-treatment in incommunicado detention. Some, including student leader Ali Afshari, were imprisoned following manifestly unfair trials. Recently two of those arrested in 1999, Ahmad Batebi and Manuchehr Mohammadi, have been removed from Evin prison and taken to an unknown location.

On 8 July 2003, student leaders Reza Ameri Nassab, Ali Moghtadari and Arash Hashemi were arrested after they took part in a press conference to commemorate the July 1999 student demonstrations. During the press conference they criticized restrictions on freedom of expression and association in Iran. They were said to have been forced to the ground, thrown into three separate vehicles and taken to an unknown destination. Ali Moghtadari was reportedly released the same evening.

AI called for a thorough independent investigation into the events, for student activists and demonstrators to be treated in line with international human rights standards and for the release of any students held solely for expressing their political views.

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Government repression continues in Sudan despite peace talks

The hopes of millions of Sudanese people have been raised by peace talks between

the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). For much of the past 45 years, civil war has raged in the south of the country and these negotiations appear to offer the best prospect for peace in decades.

Yet even as the talks continue, another conflict is raging in Darfur, western Sudan. Attacks on farmers in the area by nomadic groups and "bandits" have increased in recent years. Hundreds of people have been killed and their animals, crops and homes looted. Access to the area is too dangerous for aid to reach many of the homeless and hungry.

The government lays the blame on a struggle for scarce resources resulting from desertification, but stands accused of failing to protect the farmers in order to drive them from their land.

The government's inadequate and belated response has been heavy-handed, and has only served to inflame the situation by violating the human rights of the local population. Hundreds of people have been arbitrarily thrown into prison without charge or trial and denied communication with the outside world for months. Many report that they have been tortured in custody. Some, including a 15-year-old boy, have been sentenced to death after unfair trials.

An armed group has emerged, the Sudan Liberation Army, which claims that it has taken up arms in order to protect the people of the area and to combat marginalization and underdevelopment. The government has vowed to eliminate this group through the use of military force.

AI has called for an international commission of inquiry to be established to investigate the deteriorating state of affairs in Darfur and to identify mechanisms to protect the population from violence.

Not only is conflict festering while peace talks continue, but members of civil society in government controlled areas of Sudan are being prevented from even discussing the peace process. Political activists, members of civil society groups and human rights defenders have been detained incommunicado and harassed. Students suspected of belonging to the opposition have been tortured. Meetings on the peace process have been forcibly broken up by security forces.

On 2 July security officers raided the house of Ghazi Suleiman, Chair of the Sudan Human Rights Group, and arrested him. He was interrogated about his involvement in the "Khartoum Declaration", a statement on the peace process and the status of Sudan's capital city issued by political and civil society groups. His current whereabouts are not known. Elhadi Tangur, a representative of Blue Nile State, was arrested on 16 June after reportedly meeting General Sumbeyio, a leading mediator in the peace process. He is detained incommunicado, reportedly in the headquarters of the security forces. More than 35 women from the Nuba Mountain Women's Association in Khartoum who were travelling to a conference on peace and development were arrested on 2 June and detained overnight.

Without respect for human rights, there is no prospect of a sustainable peace. If discrimination and injustice persist, so will conflict and bloodshed. However, the peace talks have not addressed human rights directly but have so far focused on power-sharing, borders and security issues.

AI has called on both parties to the conflict and the mediators to the peace talks to address human rights issues comprehensively in their discussions and to put the

human rights of all Sudanese at the heart of any future agreement.

See, *Sudan: Empty promises? Human rights violations in government controlled areas* (AFR 54/036/2003).

Hundreds of Kenyan women allege that they were raped by UK soldiers

Sabina Ngedu Lesirikali was walking home after school with three other younger girls near the village of Archers Post, central Kenya, in 1988. The girls came across two UK soldiers who were resting under a tree. One of the soldiers reportedly grabbed Sabina and took her behind some bushes. Both soldiers reportedly took turns in raping her. Meanwhile the other girls ran to tell Sabina's mother that she was being attacked.

Sabina's mother found her unconscious and bleeding under a tree. Sabina told AI that she had never had sex before and bled profusely as the soldiers had "torn her up". Her mother reported the attack to the chief and the elders. About a month later Sabina found that she was pregnant. She eventually gave birth to twin boys and was forced to leave school.

In Kenya, people who have been raped often face hostility from family, community and the police. Those who seek justice are confronted by a system that ignores, denies and even condones violence against women and protects the perpetrators.

Sabina told AI that since the rape, she has been regarded as inferior by her community and is not allowed to take part in traditional ceremonies. Her son is often derided by other children and referred to as a "mzungu", a white person.

About 650 allegations of rape have been made against members of the UK Army, posted to Kenya for training. Most of the incidents reported to AI occurred in the last 20 years, but the allegations cover a period of more than 35 years. The rapes allegedly took place in central Kenya near areas where the UK army undergoes training. More than half of the cases involve allegations of gang rape. Some of those reported to have been sexually assaulted were children at the time.

Women have reported suffering serious physical injuries and long-lasting psychological trauma as a result of being attacked.

Several of these rape claims appear to have been reported to either or both UK and Kenyan authorities soon after the alleged attacks took place. Both countries' authorities failed to take effective action either to investigate the claims and bring the alleged perpetrators to justice or to prevent further attacks. AI is concerned that such systemic failure over more than two decades may amount to institutional acquiescence in these rapes and may have contributed to the emergence of a pattern of grave human rights violations.

AI calls on the UK government to establish immediately an independent and impartial commission of inquiry into the conduct of the UK Army in light of the hundreds of allegations of rape of Kenyan women by UK army personnel. The UK government should ensure that civilian police and prosecution authorities investigate all allegations of criminal conduct by UK soldiers in Kenya and that those found to have committed rape are brought to justice in the course of a fair trial.

For further information and for AI's recommendations to the Kenyan government, see *United Kingdom: Decades of Impunity: Serious allegations of rape of Kenyan women by UK Army personnel* (EUR 45/014/2003) and *Kenya: Rape – the invisible crime* (AFR 32/001/2002).

Opposition silenced in run-up to elections in Rwanda

The return to Rwanda of former Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu – a leading member of the banned opposition party Mouvement Démocratique Républicain (MDR) – from exile in Belgium on 20 June was the subject of a media blackout. Upon his arrival in Kigali, journalists were not allowed to interview or photograph him, a sign of the tense political situation in Rwanda. His access to the public media has been restricted to a single brief television appearance; the government controls all TV and radio outlets.

In the run-up to elections, the Rwandan government has taken a number of steps to limit the ability of opposition parties to organize. Within two weeks of a new Constitution entering into force in June, laws were passed governing the conduct of political organizations and politicians, election procedures and the eligibility criteria for candidates.

The new laws restrict political debate and effectively prohibit campaigning at grassroots level, thereby strengthening the hold of the ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). The Constitution refers frequently to “national unity” as a priority and the MDR was banned in May on the grounds that its policies were “against national unity”.

The government has named 46 people who they allege are leaders of the MDR. Of the 46 people named at least seven have “disappeared”. Of these at least two are feared murdered. Some people on the list are imprisoned on charges such as civil disobedience, others have gone into exile. AI is concerned that all those named are at grave risk. Former MDR party members are attempting to form a new political party, Alliance pour la démocratie, l'équité et le progrès, (ADEP-Mizero). It remains to be seen whether the government will authorize them to form this new party.

Former Rwandese President Pasteur Bizimungu, former government minister Charles Ntakirutinka and six of their supposed supporters have been in prison since May 2002 for attempting to form a political party. AI considers them prisoners of conscience. See Worldwide Appeal April 2003.

Presidential elections have been set for 25 August, with parliamentary elections to take place on 29 September. The Rwandese government, which is dominated by the RPF, has refused to postpone the elections as this would increase the opposition's ability to organize and campaign.

Please write to the President Paul Kagame, calling on him to investigate the “disappearances”, release all prisoners of conscience and ensure the right to organize non-violent political activities. Send appeals to: Major General Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, Presidency, PO Box 15, Kigali, Rwanda. Fax: +250 84769/84390.

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Worldwide appeals

Laos

Hmong tortured and unfairly tried

Three ethnic Hmong Lao nationals, Thao Moua, Pa Fue Khang, and Char Yang, were arrested in June, reportedly tortured in police custody and sentenced to long prison terms after an unfair trial with no legal representation.

The three men were arrested on or around 4 June together with two European journalists and a US Lao interpreter. The three were acting as guides and assistants to the journalists who were investigating the decades-old internal armed conflict between ethnic Hmong and the Lao authorities.

Witness reports indicate that the three were tortured in police custody after their arrest. They were reportedly beaten with sticks and bicycle chains and one was repeatedly knocked unconscious.

The three were sentenced, respectively, to 12, 15 and 20 years in prison on 30 June. It is believed that Char Yang may have escaped from detention and been sentenced in his absence. Initially, the Lao authorities reported that they were going to charge the men in relation to the reported death of a local government militia member but they were eventually charged with obstructing justice, possession of weapons and possession of drugs. Their trial lasted just over two hours and they had no legal representation.

Thao Moua and Pa Fue Khang were last reported held in Phontong prison, Vientiane. AI is calling on the authorities to allow their families to have access to them and to ensure that they receive any necessary medical care.

Reports of the initial torture and ill-treatment of the group by the police must be independently investigated and the results made public.

Please write, calling for a new trial for Thao Moua, Pa Fue Khang and Char Yang which meets international standards including legal representation by lawyers of their choice. Call for assurances that they will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention.

Send appeals to: Prime Minister Bounyang Vorachit, Office of the Prime Minister, Rue Sisavat, Vientiane, Laos. Fax: + 856 21 414009 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or write to the diplomatic representatives of Laos accredited to your country.

Algeria

Human rights activist in hiding

Algerian doctor and human rights activist Salaheddine Sidhoum has been living in hiding for almost nine years. He would like to return to a normal life, but may face arrest, unfair trial and imprisonment if he presents himself to the authorities.

Since 1992 Salaheddine Sidhoum has documented serious human rights violations, such as killings, torture and “disappearances”, committed by the security forces, state-armed militias and armed groups. This has made him the target of threats from different sides in the conflict in Algeria. Before he went into hiding in 1994 the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), was said to have blacklisted him, along with other intellectuals, and to have been planning his assassination. In November 1994, a friend was allegedly tortured by the security forces, partly to extract a “confession” to incriminate Salaheddine Sidhoum in unauthorized political activity. Salaheddine Sidhoum went into hiding three days before a documentary was broadcast on French television showing him denouncing cases of grave human rights violations committed by the authorities. A day later armed men, believed to be security officers, came to his house asking where he was and intimidating his family.

In 1997, while still in hiding, Salaheddine Sidhoum was sentenced in his absence to 20 years’ imprisonment, accused of undermining the state, and other charges related to “acts of terrorism or sub-

version”. Like hundreds of other trials involving similar charges during the 1990s, his trial was grossly unfair. In accordance with Algerian law, when he emerges from hiding and presents himself to the authorities, the 1997 verdict will be quashed and he will face a retrial on the same charges.

Salaheddine Sidhoum has continued to document human rights abuses in Algeria since going into hiding, compiling testimonies and publishing them on the Internet. Several other Algerian activists who researched and campaigned on human rights during the 1990s, today live in exile after receiving death threats against themselves or members of their family.

Please write to the Algerian authorities urging them to ensure that Salaheddine Sidhoum is allowed to exercise his right to freedom of expression and can collect and disseminate information about human rights conditions without fear of reprisal or prosecution. If he is retried on recognizably criminal charges, he should receive a prompt and fair trial in line with international standards.

Send appeals to: M. Mohammed Charfi, Ministre de la Justice, Ministère de la Justice, 8 Place Bir Hakem, 16030 El Biar, Alger, Algeria. Fax: +213 21 921 243 / 921 701.

Eritrea

Jehovah’s Witnesses detained for nearly 10 years

Paulos Eyassu, Isaac Moges and Negede Teklemariam have been detained incommunicado without charge or trial in Eritrea since 24 September 1994. All three are Jehovah’s Witnesses and because of their religious beliefs refused to comply with the military service law. They are reportedly held in Sawa military training centre.

Particularly as a consequence of their refusal to serve in the army, which is a principle of their belief worldwide, Jehovah’s Witnesses were stripped of their basic civil rights in 1994 by the Eritrean government, because they “refused to recognize the state and its laws”. Jehovah’s Witnesses were dismissed from government employment, barred from trading and using government facilities including schools and hospitals, and denied identity documents and passports.

The government established compulsory national service in 1994 for all citizens between 18 and 40 years, comprising 6 months’ military training and 12 months’ development service. The government has continually refused to accept the internationally recognized right to conscientious objection to military service. Conscription was later extended indefinitely, even after the end of the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia. The penalty for evading it is three years’ imprisonment but no one is known to have been taken to a military court. Instead they have been detained indefinitely and are believed to have been tortured and ill-treated.

An unknown number of Jehovah’s Witnesses are believed to be currently detained for refusing military service in recent years, although they have been willing to perform civilian national service. All Jehovah’s Witnesses arrested in Asmara and other towns in April 2003 in a crack-down on all minority religions have now been released without charge.

Please write, calling for the release of these three long-term prisoners of conscience.

Send appeals to: His Excellency President Issayas Afewerki, Office of the President, PO Box 257, Asmara, Eritrea.

Updates

Israel renews detention orders

'Abed al-Rahman al-Ahmar is still in administrative detention. The order was renewed for six months on 2 June and again only states that he is a “danger to the security of the area”. See Worldwide Appeals February 2003. He remains in detention without charge or trial. In replies to AI appeals, the Israeli authorities claim that he is “a senior activist in a terrorist organization, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, an organization known to carry out terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians.”

AI reiterates its calls on the Israeli authorities that, if they have evidence of 'Abed's involvement in violent activities, he should be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and promptly tried in accordance with internationally accepted standards for fair trial. Otherwise, he should be immediately and unconditionally released. 'Abed has not been allowed to see his son Quds, born on 23 April, or receive pictures of him.

Asma Muhammad Suleiman Saba'neh remains in administrative detention without charge or trial. See Worldwide Appeals May 2003. An appeal against the order was rejected in May. AI remains concerned about Asma Saba'neh's health, as she was reportedly still suffering from headaches and other health problems such as dizziness and loss of weight, which might be related to her previous history of brain tumours. She was finally allowed a CT scan on 27 May 2003, but she has not been seen by a specialist doctor since that date.

Please continue to send appeals on behalf of both these administrative detainees to: The Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, 3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187, Kiryat Ben Gurion, Jerusalem 91919, Israel. Fax: +972 2 651 2631. Email: pm_eng@pmo.gov.il

Council of Europe death penalty ban

AI welcomes the entry into force of Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Protocol No.13 bans the death penalty in all circumstances. This closes the gap left by Protocol No. 6 which prohibits the death penalty except for acts committed in times of war or imminent threat of war. Protocol No. 13 has been ratified by 15 of the 45 Council of Europe member states, and has been signed but not yet ratified by 26 member states. Only four member states – Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Turkey – have neither signed nor ratified Protocol No. 13. AI is calling on all Council of Europe member states to sign and ratify this important instrument.

International Criminal Court

Luis Moreno Ocampo was inaugurated as the first Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court at a special ceremony held at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands, on 16 June. He now begins the process of examining over 400 complaints of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes submitted to the Court since 1 July 2002, when the Court's jurisdiction began. Following his election on 21 April, Luis Moreno Ocampo said: “I deeply hope that the horrors humanity has suffered during the 20th century will serve us as a painful lesson, and that the creation of the International Criminal Court will help us to prevent these atrocities from being repeated in the future.”

Migrants Rights Convention

The International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (the Migrants Rights Convention) came into force on

1 July. AI welcomes the entry into force of this important human rights tool for the protection of the human rights of some 175 million migrants around the world and urges all states to accede to it.

Russian Federation torture report

The Russian government has authorized the publication of one of the reports of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture following visits to the country. AI hopes that the publication of this report will lead to more accountability on the part of the Russian authorities and to measures to prevent torture.

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Denial of justice in Myanmar

The most recent crack-down on members and supporters of the opposition party National League for Democracy (NLD) in Myanmar (Burma) highlights the systemic denial of justice for political activists in the country.

More than 250 people, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, have been detained or are missing since a violent attack on the NLD on 30 May 2003. Many have been held incommunicado for more than two months without charge or trial. Some have reportedly been tortured, and many have been injured. They are apparently held because of their peaceful political activities.

Such violations of the most basic human rights are not unusual in Myanmar. People are often arrested in the middle of the night and taken, with head hooded, to an unknown location. They are then deprived of sleep, food and water, interrogated for long periods, and threatened or beaten by members of the state Military Intelligence.

Prisoners are frequently deprived of any outside contact before being brought to trial – if they are brought to court at all. The authorities can order people to be held for up to five years without any appeal to the courts, and with no charge and no trial. Those brought to trial may not know what charges have been brought against them or even that their trial is taking place until they arrive at it. Trials are frequently held in secret, and prisoners are usually denied their right to a lawyer or to call or question witnesses. Complaints of torture to the judge are usually ignored. Often prisoners are not allowed to see the judgment against them and are unable to appeal.

And for what “crimes” does this happen? People have been charged with spreading, or intending to spread “false rumours” for telling jokes, writing poems, being a member of a dissenting political organization, or having contact with one; organizing peaceful demonstrations; trying to pass on information about human rights violations; even wearing the colour yellow (the colour of the NLD).

The vague wording of some laws gives the authorities sweeping powers to curtail freedom of expression, assembly and association, and to detain peaceful critics. The authorities can repeatedly detain people for up to five years with no trial, charge, or right to appeal. Poor prison conditions and inadequate medical care mean that many prisoners have serious health problems.

More than 1,300 political prisoners, including monks, students, lawyers, teachers, writers, shop-keepers, political activists, are currently detained in Myanmar. They are held under laws that breach international human rights standards, and denied the protection of those safeguards that exist in Myanmar’s legal system.

See AI’s memorandum to the military government, *Myanmar: Justice on trial* (ASA

16/019/2003).

Pinochet's ship of death

[Picture caption] The Chilean naval training ship *Esmeralda* travels the world as a roving embassy for Chile. However, people were tortured on the *Esmeralda* following the military coup that brought Augusto Pinochet to power in 1973. Among the victims was a British-Chilean priest, Michael Woodward (shown on placard in second picture), who was tortured to death. This year the ship was met, at various stops around the world, by AI members protesting at the Chilean government's denial that the ship was used as a torture centre. Many of the ships scheduled stops for 2003 have been cancelled. The official government explanation is "reasons of State". AI has published a number of testimonies of victims tortured on the *Esmeralda*. See Chile: Torture and the naval training ship the *Esmeralda* (AMR 22/006/2003).

[Second picture caption] AI members in Lübeck, Germany, protest: the sign reads 'No impunity for torturers in Chile'

Reconstruction after the war in Iraq – the human rights view

Now that the war in Iraq is over, companies are scrambling to participate in the reconstruction process. It is of utmost importance that the reconstruction process include due attention to human rights concerns, and that Iraqis play a central role in this process.

UN Security Council Resolution 1483 lifted sanctions and enabled the international community to work on Iraq's reconstruction. However, the resolution did not provide for sufficient independent oversight of the occupying powers, the USA and UK, and did not contain adequate mechanisms of accountability.

The goal of reconstruction should be to ensure the protection and realization of all human rights for all Iraqis. Iraqis have a right to participate in decisions that will affect them, and ought to make decisions on rebuilding, on foreign investment, and on the selling of state assets.

Iraq's need for resources is great. Its infrastructure has been devastated after two wars and 12 years of sanctions. Iraq has to reform and reconstruct its justice system. It has to provide redress for the victims of war and repression. It also has to give its population food and other necessities. The international community is apparently confident that Iraq's oil revenues can pay for reconstruction, but while Resolution 1483 proposes that a mechanism to supervise Iraq's oil revenues should be created, the occupying powers must ensure that the resources benefit Iraqis.

International experience has shown that the extraction of resources, notably oil, in insecure environments can contribute to conflict and human rights abuse, and that lack of transparency in the awarding of major reconstruction projects often leads to corruption. This could undermine efforts to build the rule of law in Iraq, as well as diverting resources that might be used to benefit the Iraqi people.

In addition, specific corporate practices – in employment, for example, or in relation to security operations – may lead to human rights abuses.

The Iraqi people have suffered for decades from repression, war and sanctions. As their economy opens up to foreign companies and institutions, there is a pressing need to ensure that these do not exacerbate human rights abuses.

AI, in a report launched on the eve of an extraordinary session of the World Economic

Forum in Jordan in June, called on the occupying powers to make human rights paramount in the reconstruction process; to involve Iraqis, including women, in decision-making; to award contracts in a transparent manner; and to manage oil revenues openly and accountably.

AI also made an innovative series of recommendations to companies intending to operate in Iraq, which in combination amount to a call for companies to respect human rights and to take steps to ensure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

See, *On whose behalf? – Human rights and the economic reconstruction process in Iraq* (MDE 14/128/2003), or the Iraq campaign web page on www.amnesty.org

Public pressure in China has effect

China has bowed to public pressure and has abolished “Custody and Repatriation” centres which were set up to control the flow of migrant workers to urban areas. There was a public outcry when Sun Zhigang, a fashion designer and migrant worker, was murdered in one of the centres in Guangzhou city after being wrongfully arrested. AI welcomes this move and hopes that the implementation of new procedures to replace the centres will curb the human rights violations that have occurred in the past. AI is also calling for the abolition of “Re-education through Labour” camps, another form of administrative detention where hundreds of thousands of people are arbitrarily detained for up to four years with no recourse to the courts. Torture and ill-treatment are reportedly common in these camps.

For further information see, *The Wire*, June 2003; *China: Establishing the rule of law and respect for human rights: the need for institutional and legal reforms* (ASA 17/052/2002); and *China: Abolition of “Custody and Repatriation” welcomed, but more needs to be done* (ASA 17/028/2003).