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@GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL also organizes massive worldwide campaigns. These have proved extremely effective, uniting the international community in the protection of human rights. Members from all continents bombard government leaders and embassies with letters and petitions, and hold public displays and demonstrations. Such campaigns are often widely publicized in the local, national and international news media. But behind the publicity is the persistent casework of thousands of members and groups that has brought help and hope to thousands of victims and their families.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

The postcards, telegrams and parcels *do* get through. The political lobbying and public awareness campaigns are effective. This is shown by the number of letters that come back, many of them smuggled out of prison or past airport censors. The same week that a young law student was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in an Eastern European country – he had been arrested after collecting signatures calling for the release of political prisoners – his father wrote to Amnesty International:

' I experienced the blessing of your appeal, for you have raised your voice in defence of my son. . . Amnesty International is a light in our time, particularly for those on whose eyes darkness has fallen, when the prison doors close behind them. By your selfless work this light shines on the ever-widening circle of those who need it.' A teacher in Latin America told Amnesty International that while he was being tortured, the police telephoned his home and forced his wife to listen to his screams. During the ordeal she died of a heart attack. The teacher survived and was eventually allowed to go into exile with his children. He told us:

' They killed my wife. They would have killed me too; but you intervened and saved my life.'

The movement has become a lifeline – a “conspiracy of hope” open to everyone prepared to work in defence of human dignity. It has proved that ordinary people can work together regardless of politics in an effort to halt the excesses of tyranny.

DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GIVE PRACTICAL HELP TO PRISONERS?

Amnesty International tries to be of real assistance to people whose cases it takes up. International publicity about their plight is important, as is the constant stream of letters and appeals. Amnesty International delegations visiting the country often interview prisoners and may include doctors to examine torture victims. Amnesty International medical groups help to secure better treatment for the prisoners and independent care and rehabilitation after their release. In some cases, relief funds are raised for food, clothing and other aid, both for prisoners and their families.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE WORST?

Amnesty International does not grade governments according to their human rights records. Even if it wanted to, it could not. Repression in some countries prevents the free flow of information about human rights abuses. Techniques of repression and their impact vary widely. In some countries, courts sentence prisoners of conscience to lengthy terms of imprisonment; in others they are held for years without trial. Different torture methods are used: some result in agonizing physical pain; others cause severe psychological trauma. Amnesty International does not attempt

to compare these horrific abuses. Instead, it concentrates on trying to end the specific violations of human rights in each case.

DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZE BOYCOTTS?

In its efforts to mobilize world public opinion, Amnesty International neither supports nor opposes economic or cultural boycotts. It does take a stand against international transfers of military, police or security equipment and expertise used by recipient governments to detain prisoners of conscience and to inflict torture and carry out executions.

What you can do

A subscription to Amnesty International gives you access to new and often unpublished information about human rights abuses on a global, independent and impartial basis. You will also receive the monthly *Amnesty International Newsletter*, which includes details about how you can help victims, or the annual *Amnesty International Report*, a country-by-country survey of the organization's concerns and activities around the world.

When you join Amnesty International you join a worldwide movement of people who are united by their desire to protect and promote human rights. There are more than 1,100,000 members and subscribers in over 150 countries and territories, with thousands of local groups in over 80 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia/Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. As an individual member or part of a local group, you will be encouraged to participate in many types of activities – from sending a postcard to organizing huge human rights campaigns.

Amnesty International relies on donations from its members and supporters. By donating to Amnesty International, you help the organization continue its work and ensure its financial independence.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Amnesty International's work is based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization has formal relations with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Council of Europe, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States.

Amnesty International received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for its contribution to "securing the ground for freedom, for justice, and thereby also for peace in the world".

On the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Amnesty International was awarded the United Nations Human Rights Prize for "outstanding achievements in the field of human rights".

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AROUND THE WORLD

Amnesty International members run the movement they finance. There are sections in more than 40 countries and many more local groups worldwide. Major policy decisions are taken by an International Council made up of representatives from all Sections. They elect an International Executive Committee which carries out their decisions and appoints the movement's Secretary General who also heads the International Secretariat.

To maintain the impartiality that is fundamental to the movement, Amnesty International groups and members do not provide information on human rights violations in their own country. Nor do they take action, as Amnesty International members, on individual cases in their own countries. Such concerns are taken up by members in other parts of the world in the spirit of international solidarity. Members do, however, take part in campaigns to *prevent* human rights violations in

their own country. For example, they mount human rights education programs in local schools, campaign for the abolition of the death penalty, and lobby their government to ratify international human rights standards. Groups also translate and distribute Amnesty International's human rights reports on every country in the world – including their own.

For further details, please write to the address (if there is one) in the box, at: Or check to see if Amnesty International is listed in your telephone directory, or contact the International Secretariat in London.

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Thousands of people are in prison because of their beliefs. Many are held without charge or trial. Torture and the death penalty are wide- spread. Men, women and children “disappear” after being taken into official custody. Others are put to death without any pretence of legality – selected and killed by governments and their agents.

These abuses – taking place in countries around the world – demand an international response. The protection of human rights is a universal responsibility, transcending the boundaries of nation, race and ideology. This is the fundamental belief upon which Amnesty International's work is based.

HOW DID AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BEGIN?

In 1961 a British lawyer, Peter Benenson, wrote a newspaper article urging people everywhere to work impartially and peacefully for the release of prisoners of conscience. Within a month more than a thousand people from various countries had offered practical help. What started as a one-off publicity effort became a growing international movement.

WHO SUPPORTS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL?

Amnesty International is open to anyone who supports its goals. The members come from all walks of life and reflect a wide variety of views. All are encouraged to participate as fully as possible in Amnesty International's many activities.

IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL?

Amnesty International does not support or oppose any government or political system. It is impartial. It does not necessarily support or oppose the views of the prisoners whose rights it seeks to protect. It is concerned solely with the protection of the human rights involved in each case, regardless of the ideology of the government or the beliefs of the victims.

DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OPPOSE ABUSES BY OPPOSITION GROUPS?

Yes. Amnesty International opposes hostage-taking, the torture and killing of prisoners and other arbitrary killings by opposition groups. This does not, however, change Amnesty International's primary focus on government responsibilities.

HOW DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OBTAIN ITS INFORMATION?

Amnesty International attaches great importance to impartial and accurate reporting of facts. Its activities depend on meticulous research into allegations of human rights violations. The International Secretariat in London (with some 300 staff comprising about 40 nationalities) has a Research Department which collects and

analyses information from a wide variety of sources. These include hundreds of newspapers and journals, government bulletins, transcriptions of radio broadcasts, reports from lawyers and humanitarian organizations, as well as letters from prisoners and their families. Amnesty International also sends fact-finding missions for on-the-spot investigations and to observe trials, meet prisoners and interview government officials. Amnesty International takes full responsibility for its published reports; if proved wrong on any point it issues a correction.

WHAT DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DO WITH ITS INFORMATION?

Once the International Secretariat has established that a case should be acted upon, details and action suggestions are sent to its volunteer membership. In some cases a dossier will be sent to one or more Amnesty International groups, which will then begin campaigning from abroad to the authorities of the country concerned. In addition, information about current or long-term human rights concerns is documented in reports, newsletters, books, videos, photograph exhibitions and other campaigning material. Such material is always circulated to the membership during major campaigns. Every year a worldwide summary of Amnesty International's research and activities is published in an annual report.

HOW IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FINANCED?

Amnesty International's rules about accepting donations are strict and ensure that any funds received by any part of the organization do not affect its integrity, make it dependent on any donor, or limit its freedom of activity. By far the greatest part of the movement's funds come from small, individual donations, from membership fees and local fund-raising events. It does not seek or accept government money under any circumstances.

Amnesty International is an independent worldwide movement campaigning to protect and promote basic human rights. The main focus of its campaigning is to:

Free all prisoners of conscience

These are people who have been detained for their beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or language – who have not used or advocated violence.

Ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners

Abolish the death penalty, torture and cruel treatment of prisoners

End extrajudicial executions and 'disappearances'