

## FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND ITS WORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

### The beginning

- Amnesty International was launched in 1961 by British lawyer Peter Benenson.
- His newspaper appeal, “The Forgotten Prisoners”, was published worldwide on 28 May 1961 and brought in more than 1,000 offers of support for the idea of an international campaign to protect human rights.
- Within 12 months the new organization had sent delegations to four countries to make representations on behalf of prisoners, and had taken up 210 cases. Amnesty International members had organized national bodies in seven countries. The first year's expenditure was £6,040.
- The principles of strict impartiality and independence were established. The emphasis was on the international protection of human rights: Amnesty International members were to act on cases worldwide and not become involved in cases in their own countries.

### Today

- Amnesty International has more than 1,100,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in over 150 countries and territories and more than 8,000 local Amnesty International groups in over 70 countries.
- There are nationally organized sections in 51 countries, 30 of them in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.
- The organization's nerve centre is the International Secretariat in London, with over 280 staff and over 70 volunteers from more than 50 countries. The Secretary General is Pierre Sané.
- Amnesty International is governed by a nine-member International Executive Committee (IEC). It comprises eight volunteer members, elected every two years by an International Council comprising representatives of the worldwide movement, and an elected member of the International Secretariat.

### Helping the victims

- Amnesty International has a precise mandate, detailed in an international statute. The main focus of its campaigning is to:
    - *free all prisoners of conscience*. These are people detained anywhere 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 other cruel treatment of prisoners*;
    - *end extrajudicial executions and “disappearances”*.
- Amnesty International** also opposes abuses by opposition groups: hostage taking, torture and killings of prisoners and other arbitrary killings.

### At the end of March 1993:

- Amnesty International takes long-term action on all the concerns reflected in its mandate, including prisoners of conscience. By the end of March 1993 4,762 Amnesty International volunteer groups were working on behalf of 4,741 named individuals and 6,304 unnamed individuals from 82 countries worldwide.
- Rapid action for prisoners and others who are in immediate danger, (for example, those who are facing torture or execution), is mobilized by the **Urgent Action** network of around 50,000 volunteers in over 75 countries. They are organized through electronic mail, telex, fax, express and airmail to send fast appeals on behalf of those at risk.

By the end of March 1993, 116 new actions on 44 countries had been issued to the Urgent Action network. Each Urgent Action can generate hundreds of appeals to the authorities within days of being issued and several thousand within a few weeks. Further information was issued on 113 actions so the network was activated 229 times during the first three months of 1993.

The new actions covered a variety of concerns: 45 were of behalf of prisoners whom it was feared might be tortured; 19 related to those at risk of, or who had been the victim of, extrajudicial execution or “disappearance”; 24 were on behalf of prisoners sentenced to death; and 24 for people who had been harassed or had received death threats. Actions included many other concerns, for example: arbitrary arrest, prolonged incommunicado detention, detention without charge or trial, death in custody and risk of refoulement. (Note: these concerns are not mutually exclusive. More than one concern may feature on any action.)

— Between 1 January and 1 April 1993, 18 Medical Actions were issued for the attention of some 8000 health professionals involved in Amnesty International networks. There are AI medical groups in more than 30 countries appealing on behalf of seriously ill prisoners without access to medical care; prisoners who have been tortured or have died in custody from torture or through lack of medical care; in cases of corporal or capital punishment involving the medical profession; in cases where medical professionals themselves become the target of abuses because of their professional or human rights activities.

— The number of groups working in a **Regional Action Network (RAN)** exceeded 2,410. RAN members concentrate their work on any one of five regions of the world to assist people subjected to any of the human rights abuses that Amnesty International opposes in almost all of the world's countries.

— From June 1992 to the end of March 1993 Amnesty International had issued 94 **major documents** on human rights violations in 50 countries.

The reports covered a range of human rights violations, such as widespread human rights abuses in Myanmar; long-term detention and torture of political prisoners in Syria; extrajudicial executions in Chad; torture, ill-treatment and use of excessive force by police in Los Angeles, USA; gross abuses of human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina; inadequate protection for refugees and asylum-seekers in Japan.

— In the first three months of 1993, the organization sent 11 **delegations** to 10 countries. Delegates discussed Amnesty International's concerns with government authorities, observed political trials and carried out on-the-spot investigations into human rights abuses. Countries visited over the last 12 months ranged from South Africa to Venezuela and from Pakistan to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The organization has made over 1,155 visits to different countries since 1961.

## **The continuing challenge**

Every year Amnesty International documents human rights violations against men, women and children in all regions of the world. During 1992:

### **Prisoners**

— Prisoners of conscience - jailed solely for the peaceful exercise of their basic human rights — were held in some 62 countries. Possible prisoners of conscience were held in at least 32 countries.

— the number of known prisoners of conscience in those countries totalled 4,400.

— At least 300,000 political prisoners in total were detained without charge or trial or under administrative detention in more than 60 countries.

### **Unfair trials**

— More than 1,500 political prisoners were imprisoned after unfair trials in at least 30 countries.

— Political prisoners in 20 countries were still in prison after unfair trials in previous years.

### **Torture and ill-treatment**

— Detainees were tortured or ill-treated in prisons, police stations or secret detention centres in at least 110 countries.

— More than 500 people died apparently as a result of torture or inhuman prison conditions or in “suspicious” circumstances in some 48 countries.

### **Extrajudicial executions**

— Suspected government opponents, members of targeted ethnic groups or people living in opposition strongholds were apparently victims of extrajudicial execution in 45 countries.

#### **“Disappearances”**

— At least 950 people were reported to have “disappeared” after arrest by security forces in some 25 countries and many others remained “disappeared” in at least 27 countries after “disappearing” in previous years.

#### **Death Penalty**

— During 1992, Amnesty International learned of 1,708 prisoners known to have been executed in 35 countries and 2,697 people were sentenced to death in 62 countries. The true figures are certainly higher.

— By the end of the year, 44 per cent of countries in the world had abolished the death penalty in law or practice. 47 countries had abolished the death penalty for all offences and 16 for all but exceptional offences, such as wartime crimes. A further 20 countries and territories, while retaining the penalty in law, had not carried out any executions for at least 10 years.

— 106 countries and territories retain and use the death penalty for ordinary crimes.

— China and Iran accounted for 82 per cent of all executions recorded by Amnesty International in 1992.

### **Human Rights developments and treaties worldwide**

Today an ever-growing human rights constituency is gathering the facts on abuses by governments, taking action to stop them and strengthening the forces necessary to prevent future violations.

— Over 1,000 domestic and regional organizations are working to protect basic human rights;

— An increasing body of international human rights agreements hold governments accountable for their actions;

— 116 governments are now party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and 119 governments are party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). These covenants require countries ratifying them to recognize or protect a wide range of human rights;

— 67 states are now party to the Optional Protocol to the (first) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Protocol establishes procedures allowing both individuals and states to present complaints of human rights violations;

— 17 states are now party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty;

— 72 governments are now party to the United Nations Convention against Torture.

### **The money**

Amnesty International's funding reflects the movement's independence and its reliance on broad public support. No money is sought or received from governments. The hundreds of thousands of donations that sustain the organization's work come from the pockets of its members and the public.

The international budget for 1992 was £13,045,000. This does not include funds needed to maintain the operations of the national bodies in individual countries or the costs of the thousands of letters and telegrams sent every month by individual members around the world.

The international budget is spent on professional research by Amnesty International staff into human rights violations worldwide, on delegations that observe trials and make representations to governments, and on the administration of the movement's international publishing, campaigning and development activities.

The international nerve centre for this unique operation, the International Secretariat, runs on just over £100 a minute. Some of the costs:

— launching a life-saving appeal on behalf of a prisoner threatened with torture or death: up to £25 in faxes and electronic mail alone;

— running the research, missions and information systems that are involved in taking up the case of an individual prisoner of conscience (average cost): over £400 a case;

— sending a delegation to meet government officials and conduct on-the-spot fact-finding (average cost): £2,300.