

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Media Briefing

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## **Amnesty International 26th International Council Meeting Media briefing México, Morelos 2003**

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### **What is the Amnesty International "ICM"?**

Amnesty International's 26th International Council Meeting (ICM) will be held in Mexico, near the city of Morelos, from Saturday 16th August to Saturday 23rd August. The ICM is the supreme governing body of Amnesty International. It decides on Amnesty International strategy, political, financial and organizational issues for the forthcoming years. The Council also elects the International Executive Committee (IEC), to act as the decision-making body of the movement between Council meetings, as well as other committees.

At this ICM, Amnesty International members from all over the world will gather in Mexico to take strategic decisions on key human rights concerns affecting the life of ordinary people, and how to act more effectively to mobilize people to work for others. Human rights activists from all cultural backgrounds, origins and walks of life, are coming together to discuss important issues which will influence their lives and hopefully those of the people they speak out for. The ICM is an occasion for interaction and communication between all these individuals, and an opportunity for building common bonds for future work.

Although the ICM itself is an internal gathering for Amnesty International representatives from around the world, journalists will be able to interview members from the delegation and will be briefed on the many issues that will be discussed during the course of the meeting.

### **Location of ICM**

Hotel Hacienda Cocoyoc, P.O. Box 300, Cuautla 62736, Morelos, Mexico

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## **Amnesty International vision**

"Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards."

## **Amnesty International mission**

"In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focusing on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights."

## **Globalising justice**

Over the last forty years, Amnesty International has built its reputation as an organisation that can be relied on to denounce injustice. However, the obligation to speak out has placed new challenges before us. Refugees and the disappeared, women, indigenous groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have all called on us to understand the particular human rights issues they face. Human rights are not limited to the political or judicial arena - they also depend upon social, economic and cultural issues, such as inadequate health care, racism, corporate irresponsibility, the denial of the right to education, and crippling debt. The world is changing - globalisation, the "war on terrorism", the increased power of market forces compared to the power of the state, new technologies - developments such as these have altered the way our world is structured. Amnesty International must always respond to such changes in order to be able to effectively carry out its work.

## **The background**

In order to determine how best to respond to the developing global climate, Amnesty International carried out an analysis of political, economic, social, technological and communications (PEST-C) trends across the world. Among its general conclusions were:

The power of the state has weakened in many areas, leading to poor governance, internal conflict, political violence, corruption and poverty.

Non-state actors have increased in influence - crime and "terrorism" threaten weak states, which respond by focusing on security rather than social policy. The power of corporations and market forces have grown relative to the power of governments.

The gap between rich and poor is widening, due to uneven economic growth and the prevalence of the market over social policy.

Large internal and international population movements are leading to rapid urbanization and increasingly diverse, multicultural societies. Notions of identity - nationality, ethnicity, race,

religion etc - are taking on different values.

Globalisation and technology developments mean new opportunities for communication and organisation on a global scale, but also greater competition for information.

## The impact on human rights issues

The human rights movement, which became strong in the cold war by denouncing tyranny and defending prisoners of conscience, must reflect the fact that the world has changed. Amnesty International must respond by broadening its focus to include all aspects of human rights, which means encompassing the social, economic and cultural arenas. From the PEST-C analysis, it is clear that:

People need greater protection during armed conflict and when states collapse.

Increasingly powerful corporate actors need to be made accountable for their human rights records.

Campaigning for economic, social and cultural justice (on issues such as wealth distribution, refugees, health, justice for women etc) is of prime importance in developing the human rights message.

In a world where seamless organisation is possible through technology, Amnesty International will need to develop its worldwide network and build coalitions with other NGOs as a critical mechanism to "globalise justice".

**However, this does not mean that Amnesty International can ignore "traditional" issues on which the organisation was built, such as inhuman prison conditions, unfair trials and prisoners of conscience. This is especially true now that the "war on terrorism" has seen the governments of Western Europe and the United States defending national security at the expense of human rights.**

## The core issues

Amnesty International proposes to strengthen its campaigning capacities through an integrated approach to human rights issues, in order to make a difference on the ground and, in consultation with other human rights groups, to focus its attention not just on country and case-specific action, but on major themes which encapsulate and clarify broad areas of global injustice. Such themes may include;

Discrimination - In environments where national security considerations are driving political agenda, acceptance of discrimination is increasing, while many internal conflicts stem from and result in religious, ethnic, gender, economic or political discrimination.

Impunity - Perpetrators of human rights abuses are not systematically brought to justice.

Meanwhile, many legal systems abuse human rights by condoning torture or employing the death penalty.

Freedom of expression - Long imperilled in many regions, the curtailing of freedom of expression is now being justified by states' increased security concerns.

Armed conflict - Millions of lives continue to be affected by war and its aftermath, which often brings a collapse in humanitarian law, weak governance and institutions which cannot serve or protect their people.

People On The Move - Millions of refugees, internally displaced, smuggled or trafficked people will continue to find their rights disregarded.

Poverty - Eighty-five per cent of the world's population has access to only 25 per cent of its resources. Mass poverty contributes to the erosion of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Human rights may then be further violated as governments, corporations, economic elites and financial institutions seek to maintain the status quo and silence demands

for reform.

## **Into action**

Amnesty International has already initiated a number of pilot projects which take up our new challenge of economic, social and cultural rights. Subjects covered by these projects include:

- The rights of the mentally disabled in Bulgaria
- Socio-economic discrimination faced by ethnic minorities in Kosovo
- The effects of closures and curfews on the freedom of movement and the right to work of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories
- The impact of poverty, gender and sexual orientation on access to health care for those suffering from HIV/AIDS in Africa

Economic, social and cultural rights have already begun forming an important part of our output and strategy. In April 2003, we issued a report urging the international community to bring about the end of human rights abuses stemming from the pillaging of vast natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It identified these abuses as the prime driver of the violence in the country, leading to hundreds of deaths, torture, poverty, malnutrition and displacement.

At the international level, we are actively supporting the development of a protocol to allow individual complaints against violations of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, promoting access to water as a fundamental human right, and expanding our work with international financial and economic institutions. We are now a member of a joint World Bank/NGO committee and are pressing for international binding regulation of corporate behaviour on human rights.

We have also been continuing to work with corporate actors, lobbying them to use their influence to promote respect for human rights, and exposing the direct and indirect impact of their actions, especially in conflict zones - we prepared specific recommendations to foreign companies as part of our campaign in Russia and Iraq. We support voluntary codes of conduct for companies and are pressing for international binding regulation of corporate behaviour on human rights and more effective monitoring of corporate behaviour. We also continue to work with initiatives such as the Kimberley Process, which requires governments and the diamond industry to implement import/export control regimes in rough diamonds to prevent conflict diamonds from fuelling war and human rights abuse.

## **What "globalising justice" will mean for the future**

Perpetrators of human rights abuses must know that they will be held accountable. Patterns of human rights violations must be replaced by sustainable systems of fairness and justice. The struggle for justice is fundamentally a struggle for the equitable distribution of power and wealth, and this is reflected in the adoption of the themes on which Amnesty International is focusing its human rights strategy. As the 21st century develops, Amnesty International is renewing its commitment to universal and indivisible rights for all peoples.

"At its heart, Amnesty International is and remains a movement fighting for individuals whose rights are violated. The difference is that from now on, we will work, not only against torture or for prisoners of conscience, but against all forms of discrimination, whether they affect political and civil rights or economic, social and cultural rights." Irene Khan, Secretary General

## **The PEST-C Trends Analysis: The Americas**

## **New World Disorder? The Future Of The Americas**

In its analysis of the Americas, Amnesty International's PEST-C analysis identified regional drivers which were then used to predict future political, economic, social, technological and environmental trends. These included:

### **Political trends**

**US hegemony will be consolidated.** The United States will increase its military, political and economic control over the region, and will impose sanctions on states that fail to comply with US-driven policies.

**Inter-governmental organisations will reduce in influence.** US unilateralism may encourage other countries to ignore the UN framework and opt out of the Inter-American System.

**Non-state actors will increase in influence.** Weaknesses in many political party systems have left the floor open for new political and social actors. Business elites will form increasingly powerful lobbies, more able to influence elections and policy.

**Insecurity and conflict may lead to "ungovernability".** Lack of democratic stability, spiralling crime levels and increased public insecurity may encourage more violence, vigilantism and authoritarian law enforcement - all challenges to human rights in the region.

**Developing regional ties.** The push for economic and political regionalisation may lead to a Free Trade Area of the Americas. However, disparities in influence will increase, with Brazil and Mexico emerging as regional "super-powers" and weaker states falling behind.

### **Economic trends**

**Continued influence of the US and on free market emphasis.** The free market is still seen as the only road to development. There will be more funding for social protection policies following the failure of the "Washington consensus" (the set of IMF/World Bank/US treasury economic prescriptions for Latin America, which led to uneven growth, poverty, and insecurity). However, few countries will tackle land reform and other structural sources of inequality. Fear of contagion following the Argentinian economic crisis will heighten vulnerability to financial volatility.

**Increased poverty** Economic crises, unsound fiscal policies and a reduction in the size of the state sector will lead to an increase in poverty in many countries. Regional economic inequality will deepen, with black/indigenous populations suffering the greatest disadvantages in wealth and education. Poverty will also be fuelled by unequal land distribution and high unemployment.

**Greater vulnerability of women** The growth of the informal labour sector in poorer areas will leave women workers vulnerable to poor conditions, while lack of social welfare provision is likely to increase women's domestic responsibilities.

### **Environmental Trends**

**Increasing impact of environmental problems.** Pollution and contamination of land, air and water, nuclear waste, deforestation, mining, destruction of biodiversity, increased energy consumption and ozone-layer destruction will fuel climate change and the depletion of natural resources, affecting the economy and social/cultural rights of whole populations. Governments, especially the USA, will fail to take environmental issues seriously.

**Climate change and natural disasters.** Droughts, hurricanes, floods and landslides will continue to affect the region acutely due to climate change. Such disasters pose a risk to political, social and economic stability.

**Increased conflicts over natural resources/urbanisation** Resource exploitation, often by multi-national corporations, will have a detrimental effect on human rights and risk increasing instability, poverty and conflict in local populations. Indigenous communities will continue to be removed from ancestral lands - possibly leading to violence. Increased urbanisation will affect water/air/sanitation quality, especially in mega-cities such as Sao Paulo and Mexico City.

### **Social trends**

**Development of New Social Movements** The failure of traditional political parties will lead to the emergence of new and more powerful single-issue social movements, connected to other movements across the globe.

**Demographic Change** Conflict, crises and lack of opportunities will lead to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons and migrants.

**Increased insecurity** Greater social unrest and human rights violations will result from the failure of traditional politics, the rise in criminality and the breakdown of state protection systems (health, pensions, unemployment aid etc). More people will be left unprotected when ill and old.

**Discrimination** Women will have a greater role in party politics, but progress on divorce and abortion legislation is likely to remain slow. Urban strain will lead to the scapegoating of migrants.

### **Technological trends**

**Latin-American growth** Latin America's internet market and information networks will grow, both as tools for the global human rights movement, and for business, security forces, political networks, government bureaucracies and organised crime. Technological advances will amplify the effects of inequality, with a more pronounced 'digital divide'.

**US hegemony** The US will maintain its strong edge in defence and security technology as it focuses on perceived threats from rogue states and "terrorist" groups. The threat of bio-warfare and bio-terrorism may also increase.

**Biotechnology** Increased exploitation of genetic resources will have human rights implications - on issues such as resource ownership, food security, rural employment and migration. Food production is moving from small farmers into the hands of large landowners, often subscribed to multinational companies.

## **The PEST-C analysis: Future trends in the rest of the world**

### **Europe**

Homogenisation will continue to develop in the West as the continent transforms from a bi-polar cold war division towards a single political, security and economic space with advanced inter-governmental systems, expanding towards the East. However, EU development could either be cohesive or paralysed by internal disagreement and lack of transparency. Instability will continue to increase from West to East, with many Eastern countries threatened by further economic crises, ethnic disharmony, conflict, unemployment, poor social provisions and undermined labour rights. Corporate influence will increase, as will the awareness and acceptance of their responsibilities.

There will be continued heavy US influence, militarily and politically through NATO and bilateral security agreements, and economically through the IMF, World Bank and the dominance of the US financial sector. The EU will exert strong influence over domestic, political, economic and legal institutions, as it attempts to expand political and economic alliances.

Russia retains its strategic nuclear role and UN Security Council seat, and its economy is likely to grow further, giving it an increasing role in reshaping Europe. The nature of the likely new pan-European political and security system is uncertain. Will it be pro US and NATO-centred,

or EU centred? Will Russia be included or excluded? Will EU/US relationships become more antagonistic?

Xenophobia, far-right politics, growing social tensions and anti-immigration policies threaten protection of vulnerable populations. Increased disaffection with party politics, privatisation and the growth of progressive and retrogressive social movements may decrease governmental power and undermine the strength of the democratic process. Social movements will follow the general trend for greater and more fluid organisation through IT communication.

Previously strong human rights policies and institutions may or may not be increasingly superseded by repressive measures to combat westward migration of refugees in conflict/discriminatory zones and the "war on terror".

Economic growth will continue to be sluggish, making crises, organised crime and corruption in the East more likely. A widening of the gap between the affluent West and poorer East is likely without strong EU intervention.

Population growth will remain slow and the average age of populations will increase.

### **Middle East and North Africa**

Monarchies/absolutist regimes are likely to predominate, despite slow moves towards democratic reform (Jordan, Morocco, some Gulf states). Regimes are likely to be unable to stand up to US "designs" on the region, which are largely seen as one-sided and employing double standards. Popular unrest (probably continuing to use Islam as a resistance ideology) may provoke political instability, repressive government measures and more state reliance on the US for protection.

Anti-US sentiment is likely to increase across the region as a result of events in Iraq. Human Rights NGOs may be targeted and isolated (as "pro-Western"). They will also be under greater pressure to prove the relevance of their agenda in the region.

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict will continue unresolved, leading to increased hostility to Israel among neighbouring states and enhanced support for radical Palestinian groups.

Increased debt, decreased income, over-reliance on oil as a major source of national income and lack of reform threaten the regional economy - a drop in oil prices plus unemployment could lead to social unrest and economic marginalisation of the area, forcing greater openness to the influence of global corporations. However, the effect of globalisation will be counter-balanced by social, cultural and religious resistance to "Western" consumerism.

Difficult economic conditions, declining social services and rising unemployment will strain relations between groups, increasing the risk of social instability and repression. Women's and minority rights issues will continue to be debated internally, but the human rights movement will remain a besieged elite.

Economic decline will affect governments' ability to buy new technology, owned by Western companies, perpetuating the digital divide. Censorship will continue (though it may become more difficult as internet use increases), while an increase in the number of young users will enable both human rights movements and conservative ideologists to disseminate their messages.

### **Asia-Pacific**

Relations with the US remain all-important, guaranteeing the balance of power in several parts of the region. The "war against terror" has increased US influence (Afghanistan, military aid to Indonesia and The Philippines), which may develop further in the event of further conflict.

Anti-American sentiment will continue to rise in civil society.

Governments are becoming weaker in many parts of Asia. There will continue to be a revival of tribal, clan and other local centres of power, an increase in unrest and ethnic/religious/communal conflict. Corruption, organised crime, and judicial inequality will contribute to the weakness of the rule of law.

Poverty will continue to affect hundreds of millions of people in the region, and there is a growing anti-globalisation (anti-American) movement. Medical care, education, food, housing and social welfare will remain restricted in many countries, especially in conflict areas. HIV/AIDS levels continue to increase.

Globalisation will impact on state autonomy, with international corporations wielding greater influence on policy. Migration is leading to internal tensions and the threat of discrimination. Exploitation of natural resources, pollution, water scarcity, industrialisation and urbanisation will contribute to environmental pressures.

In South Asia and other areas, young people predominate. Many are unemployed and ready to embrace new causes. Political ideologies have lost credibility, and the void is being filled with new beliefs or religious extremism, crime, social unrest and violence. Identity-based campaigning organisations will grow, increasingly engaging in civil action on economic, environmental, social and cultural issues.

### **Africa (sub-Saharan)**

Political control continues to depend on the threat or use of force in much of the region. Political power has recently been contested by force of arms in around half of all African countries - many of these are "forgotten crises", such as in Burundi and Somalia, which have been given relatively little attention by the international community. However, internal pressure and external sanctions means there may continue to be a fragile move towards democratic accountability and non-violent political competition.

Rapid urbanisation, the impact of HIV/AIDS, social and economic development and increased information flow is challenging traditional structures of social authority and notions of identity. Some of this has empowered people to interact and develop ideas, but it also is leading to conflict, especially around access to resources such as health, education, housing and land. The fabric of some societies is stretched to breaking point.

External actors (the World Bank/IMF, donor governments, aid agencies, multinational corporations) have a powerful economic impact on the region, often obscuring or eliminating government responsibility and popular participation. Lack of access to resources for local populations continues to provide the context for many conflicts, and there is likely to remain a deep technological divide. However, with the opening up and proliferation of the media, there is a growing internal debate on the economic and political marginalisation of Africa.

Many communities are impoverished, severely deprived of economic, social and cultural rights, and will need to be empowered to reduce dependence on foreign aid. Much conflict resolution will depend on addressing economic, social and cultural factors behind the violence.

There is much local uncertainty over what constitutes human rights, and a commitment to deal with concerns at regional and sub-regional levels will be crucial to developing a human rights response in the region - for example, on issues such as impunity.

Public Document

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