

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

40th anniversary

EXTERNAL DOCUMENT

AI Index: ACT 30/004/2001

Amnesty International “Firsts”

1st AI Urgent Action

AI issued its first full *Urgent Action*, on behalf of Professor Luiz Basilio Rossi, a Brazilian, on March 19th 1973. He was arrested for political reasons. Luiz himself believed that AI’s appeals were crucial: *“I knew that my case had become public, I knew they could no longer kill me. Then the pressure on me decreased and conditions improved.”* Prof. Rossi was released in bail, waiting for the trial, on 24th October 1973. Then in February 1974 he left for Belgium. The trial took place on March 10th 1975. He was not sentenced, but an arrest order was issued. His wife later became one of the founder members of AI Brazil’s health professionals network.

1st AI Mission

AI’s first mission was to Ghana in January 1962. Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper, a London lawyer, went there to interview the Minister of Interior and to obtain information on the members of opposition held under the Preventive Detention Act.

1st Annual Report

Published in September 1962, this first annual report detailed that 210 prisoners had been adopted by 70 groups in 7 countries, and that 1,200 cases had been documented in Prisoners of Conscience Library.

Budget to December 31st 1961

Expenditure:

Income:

Printing and Stationery	£80		
Salaries and N.I.	£212	Cash in Bank 30.11.61	£549.12.0.
Postage and Telephone	£50	Prisoner of Conscience	
Advertising and Press		Appeal Fund	
Publicity		£220.4.11.	
£700		Zurich Fund	
Appeal leaflets and		£390.0.0.	
Letters		Advertising in Amnesty	£140.0.0.
£250		Christmas Cards (est.)	£150.0.0.
Christmas Cards	£50		
Printing Amnesty	£100		
Heating and Cleaning	£15		
Sundry Expenses	£90		
<u>Outstanding a/cs</u>	<u>£120</u>		
		<u>Deficit</u>	
£1667		<u>£217.3.1.</u>	

£1667.0.0.

1st Appeal

AI's first appeal was '*Amnesty 61*'. This appeal was launched by Peter Benenson in *The Observer* and led to the birth of this permanent worldwide human rights movement.

1st AI Prisoners of Conscience

Constantin Noica

The philosopher from Romania who was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment because while he was "rusticated" (sent temporarily away from university as a punishment), his friends and pupils continued to visit him, to listen to him talk on philosophy and literature.

He was released

Rev. Ashton Jones

A leading figure in CORE Freedom Rides against the colour ban in the Southern States. Ashton Jones, a sixty-five year old Minister, was repeatedly beaten up and three times imprisoned.

He was freed

Cardinal Mindszenty

Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary had been under house arrest in the US Embassy for many years for opposing his communist government.

Finally released

Archbishop Josef Beran

He had survived two concentration camps during the Nazi occupation. But in 1948, he had been arrested and locked up again for delivering a sermon protesting about the new communist government which had seized power in a coup. In 1961, Beran had been imprisoned for 13 years.

He was released. In 1967 he celebrated his freedom by lighting an Amnesty candle in Rome

Toni Ambatuelos

He was a Greek communist who was imprisoned for his trade union activities.

He was eventually freed

Dr. Agostino Neto

Dr. Neto was an Angolan poet and doctor who suffered terrible brutality at the hands of the ruling Portuguese authorities. In June 1960 in Portugal the political police marched into his house, had him flogged in front of his family, and then dragged him away to prison without a trial for the "crime" of trying to improve health care for his country.

He was subsequently placed under controlled house arrest from where he escaped. He went on to become the first President of Angola

(At least 11 former AI prisoners of conscience have gone on to become heads of state or government.)

1st AI Secretary General

Martin Ennals (July 1968)

1st AI Group

Hampstead, London, United Kingdom

1st AI report

September 1965: AI publishes simultaneous reports on prison conditions in Portugal, South Africa and Romania.

1st Christmas Card* Action for prisoners 1961

*(*now known as the Greetings Card Campaign)*

The following is taken from the original action document:

“Here are the names of 12 Prisoners of Conscience, men and women imprisoned for their political and religious beliefs, or sometimes only because they are related to others who hold views differing from those of their governments.

*JAN CIERNY, Protestant clergyman c/o MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, PRAGUE,
CZECHOSLOVAKIA*

*KURT WALLECH, journalist
BRANDENBURG, EAST GERMANY*

ZUCHTHAUS

WILHELM SCHNEIDER, Jehova’s Witness

POLAND

MGR. IULIU HOSSU, Bishop, detained in CONVENT OF CURTEA DE ARGES, RUMANIA

DR. GOPAL CAMOTIM, lawyer ,

MAPUCA PRISON,

GOA

*CHRYSOULA KALLIMANI, housewife and mother, FYLAKES AVEROF, ATHENS,
GREECE*

THE REV. EDWIN LE MASTER, Baptist missionary in Angola c/o U.S. EMBASSY,
LISBON, PORTUGAL

M. COLL. L. ALENTORN, historian and leader of the Catalan Christian Democratic
Movement, SPAIN

FRANCISCO MOLINA, student, CUBA

RASHID HAMO, Kurd, SYRIA

ELIZABETH MAFEKING c/o BASUTOLAND CONGRESS PARTY, BOX 111, MASERU,
BASUTOLAND

MAJOR GUETACHEW AFEWORK
ABEBA, ETHIOPIA

PRISON D'AKAKI, ADDIS

The card may not reach them, but if sufficient cards are sent at least the Government concerned will know that these are no longer forgotten people and may be moved to take some action of leniency. We do not know, but we feel it is an experiment worth trying."