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## **Facts and Figures: The work of Amnesty International**

This facts and figures sheet gives an overview of the work of Amnesty International and the work carried out by the organization in 1998.

### **1) 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.

### **2) Today**

Amnesty International has more than 1,000,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in more than 160 countries and territories. There are more than 5,300 local, youth & student, and professional AI groups registered at the International Secretariat plus several thousand other youth & student groups, specialist groups, networks and coordinators in more than 90 countries & territories throughout the world.

There are nationally organized sections in 56 countries, 34 of them in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East and Central Europe.

The organization's nerve centre is the International Secretariat in London, with more than 320 permanent posts and 95 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.

### 3) 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, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth or other status -- who have not used or advocated violence;

ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners;

abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners;

end extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

Amnesty International also opposes abuses by opposition groups, including hostage taking, torture and killings of prisoners and other deliberate and arbitrary killings.

### 4) Campaigning for Human Rights

Each year, Amnesty International members around the world work on behalf of people threatened with imprisonment, unfair trials, torture or execution. This year's activities are an indication of the level of work done every year on behalf of these people.

**Worldwide campaigns:** Each year, Amnesty International members from around the world join forces to campaign for the better part of a year on human rights issues in one country or on a particular human rights issue. These major campaigns involve reporting on major human rights issues, lobbying governments and ambassadors globally for change, publicizing human rights abuses, and working closely with local human rights activists and other community organizations to achieve change.

Get Up! Sign Up! - Amnesty International's campaign to mark the **50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** surpassed its goal of getting 5 million people to pledge themselves to the rights in the UDHR by a factor of more than two. At an impressive ceremony on 10 December 1998 at the Palais de Chailot (the building in Paris where the UDHR was adopted by the UN in 1947) Pierre Sané symbolically presented Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, with 13.2 million pledges from more than 130 countries around the world. The next day, the UDHR was given a further boost at an Amnesty International concert in Paris. Artists who performed included Radiohead, Alanis Morissette, Bruce Springsteen, Peter Gabriel and Asian Dub Foundation.

In October 1998, Amnesty International launched a **year-long campaign on human rights violations in the USA with a 150-page report, *Rights for All***. The report reveals a persistent and widespread pattern of human rights violations in the USA, including police brutality, torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, and a spiralling rate of judicial execution. Racism and discrimination contribute to the denial of the fundamental rights of countless men, women and children. Amnesty International members worldwide are adding their voices to those inside the USA demanding rights for all USA citizens. Apart from working to stop specific violations, the

organization is raising awareness of the human rights record of a country which often sells itself as a shining light for human rights, and is pressing the USA government to end its reluctance to apply to itself the international human rights standards it so often says it expects of others.

## 5) Working for individuals

Amnesty International members work for individuals or groups of people suffering the range of human rights violations in the organization's mandate -- from imprisonment as prisoners of conscience to "disappearance" or extrajudicial execution.

During 1998, Amnesty International groups worked on behalf of more than 5,000 named individuals, including prisoners of conscience and victims of other human rights violations, whose cases had been assigned to them as long-term **Action Files**, or as medium-term actions through a **Regional Action Network (RAN)**. There are 23 RANs, involving around 1,800 groups, which cover human rights abuses in every country of the world.

During the year, groups worked on more than 2,100 Action Files and RAN actions, of which 330 had been launched during the year, on behalf of victims of human rights violations in 86 countries & territories.

During 1998 Amnesty International was able to close more than 200 group assignments on the detention of prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience. One of these assignments was **the adoption of Cuban prisoner of conscience, Dr Omar Del Pozo Marrero**. Dr Del Pozo, the President of the National Civic Union, a non-violent opposition group was, Amnesty International believes, imprisoned solely for his involvement with Cuba's political opposition. During his imprisonment Dr Del Pozo was often held in so-called 'punishment cells' and denied medical attention for his ulcers, and heart and kidney problems.

After his release Dr Del Pozo was forced into exile in Canada where he spoke out on behalf of the political prisoners left behind and was able to meet a member of the Netherlands Amnesty International group who had worked for his release with other Amnesty International groups in Mexico, the United Kingdom and Japan. Dr Del Pozo told the group: *"I owe my freedom to the enormous amount of work many good and humane people have done to get me released... I am greatly indebted to people like you and I considered it my duty to help you with your efforts in favour of freedom and peace for those who suffer persecution and imprisonment"*.

### Rapid Action

Rapid action for prisoners and others who are in immediate danger of serious human rights violations, such as torture or execution, is mobilized by the Urgent Action (UA) network. The network is made up of more than 80,000 volunteers in some 85 countries. Urgent Actions are distributed by the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London by e-mail and fax to Sections worldwide who then distribute them to members of the UA network asking them to send appeals by the fastest means possible. Each case can generate between 3 and 5,000 appeals.

In 1998, 425 new actions were issued to the UA network on behalf of people in 94 countries and territories. There were also 272 calls for further appeals on actions already issued, so that the network was activated a total of 697 times. Each UA or follow-up can generate hundreds of appeals to the authorities within days of being issued and several thousand within a few weeks.

Limited actions are issued where fewer appeals are required. Evaluations have suggested that in a third of all cases there is some improvement in an individual's human rights situation.

The actions issued in 1998 covered a variety of concerns on behalf of people who were either at risk or had been the victim of the following human rights violations: torture, "disappearance", prisoners sentenced to death, political killings and death threats, arbitrary arrest, prolonged incommunicado detention, detention without charge or trial, legal concerns, ill health, deaths in custody, risk of forcible repatriation and forcible exile.

Throughout the year, Amnesty International received letters and messages from people who have been helped through the Urgent Action Network. When Njuguna Mutahi and Wahome Karengo were arrested in May 1998 and held in incommunicado detention Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on their behalf. After their release on bail Njuguna Mutahi sent the following message to Amnesty international: *"I do not know how to say this but let me just say it. I was so overwhelmed by the support from Amnesty members and I think that I now have a good idea of what a membership organization can do. To all of the people who sent out appeals, I say a big thank you. I owe my release to their efforts. Once again, thank you"*.

## **Specialist Networks**

Amnesty International has specialist networks -- groups of medical professionals, lawyers and others -- who use their specialist expertise to campaign for victims of human rights violations.

**Medical Network:** The Amnesty International network of health professional members works in medical groups and networks in around 35 countries. The network took action on 59 Medical and Urgent Actions focussing on 30 countries. A report on lethal injection as an execution method was issued in early 1998 and a guide to centres working with victims of human rights violations published. Both documents were used by the health professional network to inform members of the health sector of Amnesty International's concerns. An electronic newsletter was issued fortnightly to interested health professionals.

Members of the health professional network took part in a major campaign on human rights in the USA which began in October 1998. They focussed on human rights concerns which had implications for the health of prisoners or the role of health professionals.

**International Legal Network:** Lawyers, judges, magistrates, academics, law students and others in the international legal network who are familiar with the theory and practice of law have a vital role to play in Amnesty International's work. Lawyers' groups contribute to Amnesty International's work in many ways: lawyers' groups act as technical advisers to the movement; as links between the movement and the wider legal profession; and as defenders of victims of human rights abuses, including other human rights defenders and promoters of legal reform.

In 1998 lawyers campaigning within Amnesty International continued to draw on their own professional networks and associations to amplify the human rights message. Amnesty International's lawyers' groups played a key role in all major theme campaigns during 1998, including Amnesty International's continuing campaign for a just, fair and effective international criminal court. This led to the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in July 1998. They also contributed to numerous other Amnesty International campaigns and to appeals on individual cases in a number of countries.

The Legal Network is made up of 50 groups distributed among Amnesty International Sections around the world.

**International Network on Military, Security and Police (MSP):**

At least 20 Amnesty International Sections worldwide have contact people working on military, security and police (MSP) relations -- campaigning to oppose specific transfers of MSP equipment, training or personnel to countries where they are likely to facilitate human rights violations or breaches of humanitarian law. In campaigning on such MSP relations, Amnesty International increases the pressure on those directly responsible for human rights violations and highlights the responsibility of supplier governments. During the year, MSP activists campaigned on a wide range of transfers including the shipment of sub-machine guns, armoured personnel carriers and surveillance equipment to Indonesia; light weapons, military training and assistance to the Great Lakes Region; and MSP goods and services to Turkey, including electroshock devices, attack helicopters and small arms production expertise.

Much of Amnesty International's recent MSP work has involved lobbying for the development and implementation of stringent controls on MSP transfers at the national, regional and international level. There was a significant step forward in June 1998, when the European Union (EU) adopted the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, following concerted campaigning by a range of NGOs including Amnesty International. The Code includes respect for human rights as a criterion for deciding whether or not to grant an export licence and requires EU countries to inform each other when they refuse export licences.

Similar initiatives by Amnesty International and other NGOs in the USA resulted in a proposed US Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers, which was passed by the US House of Representatives, but was not adopted by the full Congress. Amnesty International has also joined other Nobel Peace Prize recipients, such as Oscar Arias, José Ramos Horta and Desmond Tutu in developing and promoting a Nobel Laureates Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers which seeks to establish such controls at a global level.

At least 30 Sections now have a contact person working on approaches to companies. Amnesty International business groups continued to develop their contacts with companies based in their countries through seminars, round-table discussions and smaller bilateral meetings, at which Amnesty International promoted the responsibility of companies to adhere to human rights principles throughout their practices. (See *Human Rights Principles for Companies*, AI Index: ACT 70/01/98)

**Intersectional Women's Network (IWN):** More than 30 sections have formally designated focal points or coordinators for their work on women. Together they form the Intersectional Women's Network which acts as the leading advocate for campaigning and mainstreaming of women's rights within their sections and the international movement, in general. The IWN takes the lead in planning and undertaking their sections' campaigning on women's rights including the Annual Women's Action which kicks off on International Women's Day (8 March). This year's theme is on human rights of women in prisons and is linked to the USA campaign where a report on the subject was released. This will be followed by actions on the same theme but focussing on Brazil in June and on the Russian Federation later in the year.

**Working Groups on Children:** Thirty-two sections have working groups on children (WGCs) that specialise in campaigning on behalf of children and on children's rights. Every year they take the lead in mounting the Annual Children's Action, starting on 20 November, the anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) The Action is usually dedicated to a

particular theme based on CRC. Last year's theme on juvenile justice was linked to two reports released for the USA campaign: on juvenile justice and on the death penalty of minors in the US.

These working groups and their Sections have worked to promote awareness of children's rights within the movement. These efforts eventually led to the designation of Amnesty International's work on children as a high priority theme for the movement from 1998 onwards.

**Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Network:** There is a growing network of Amnesty International's lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists in the movement who are now present in close to 30 Sections. This network leads campaigning against human rights violations and discrimination perpetrated against individuals or groups based on sexual orientation. Over the years, several ICM decisions call on the movement to increase its research and campaigning capacity around the theme of human rights violations based on sexual orientation including the need to convene an Intersectional Meeting of Amnesty International's LGBT activists. This meeting finally took place in March this year and was attended by delegates from 26 sections.

**AI's Youth and Student Activism:** There is a trend that Amnesty International's membership is increasingly becoming become youth- and/or student-based. Amnesty International now has approximately 4,000 youth or student groups worldwide, with contact people in at least 45 Sections. These young members are often active campaigners, taking up the full range of Amnesty International concerns.

**Other specialist networks:** Specialization by Sections on the basis of countries, professional groups (such as lawyers', teachers' and medical groups) and themes (including women and children) continue to grow. Sections' choices are influenced by several factors including the make-up of their societies and the priorities defined by the international movement which reflect pressing issues in human rights globally. Amnesty International members have formed a number of other sectoral groups, including those working on human rights violations against trade unionists, religious people and writers and journalists.

## 6) *Human rights education*

*Amnesty International's mandate aims to contribute to the observance of human rights throughout the world as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In pursuance of this aim, Amnesty International promotes awareness and knowledge of all human rights, as well as actively campaigning against violations of certain civil and political rights.*

*Amnesty International's mainstream activities until the 1980s were mostly designed to oppose and denounce existing violations of some civil and political rights. However in the past decade there has been a growing realization among Amnesty International activists that the worldwide struggle against human rights violations can be strengthened if it is combined*

with more vigorous preventive human rights work such as human rights education (HRE) or human rights awareness (HRA) programs.

**Human rights education in practice** Human rights education is about helping people understand the importance of human rights and providing them with the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to promote and protect them.

Amnesty International sections in more than 50 countries have adopted a range of approaches to human rights education. Activities in 1998/99 have included lobbying governments to ensure that human rights are incorporated in official training and educational curricula in institutions ranging from schools to universities, military and police academies as well as civil service and other professional training programs.

In several countries Amnesty International members are working closely with the relevant authorities, for example the Ministry of Education or the police, to provide advice on the contents of these curricula. Teaching materials have also been developed in a variety of languages which form the core of AI's educational programs. Other Amnesty International sections have organized individual workshops and human rights training programs aimed at different target groups, for example teachers, women's groups and journalists.

Amnesty International advocates the use of participatory, interactive teaching methodologies as the most relevant and appropriate way to develop skills and attitudes, as well as knowledge, in both children and adults. Such methodology involves students fully in their own learning. They become active explorers of the world around them, rather than passive recipients of human rights knowledge.

Amnesty International's human rights education and other preventive work often forms part of a country strategy, aimed at enhancing the local

*impact of AI's actions and helping the development of a wider and stronger human rights movement.*

## **7) Exposing the violations**

In 1998 Amnesty International issued 93 **major external documents** on human rights violations on 49 countries including in Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, China, Colombia, Croatia, DRC/Zaire, Egypt, France, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Turkey, UK, USA, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Zambia.

Throughout the year, the organization sent 132 **delegations** to 82 countries and territories. Delegates carried out a range of work which could include discussing Amnesty International's concerns with government authorities, observing political trials and carrying out on-the-spot investigations into human rights abuses. Some of the countries visited were Albania, Australia, Botswana, China, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, Israel/Occupied Territories, the Palestinian Authority, Rwanda and the USA.

## **8) 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.

More than 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;

144 governments are now party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and 141 governments are party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These covenants require countries ratifying them to recognize or protect a wide range of human rights;

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

37 states are now party 2nd Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;

114 governments are now party to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

133 states are party to the Refugee Convention and 133 states are party to the Refugee Protocol

## **9) The continuing challenge**

Every year, Amnesty International produces a global report which details human rights violations against men, women and children in all regions of the world. The 1999 Annual Report, which detailed abuses during 1998, is indicative of the kinds and levels of abuses against people every year.

### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 47 countries in 1998.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” from previous years in 37 countries.

### **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

People were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 125 countries.

Torture or ill-treatment, lack of medical care or cruel, inhuman or degrading prison conditions were confirmed or suspected of leading to deaths in custody in 51 countries.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

Confirmed or possible prisoners of conscience were held in 78 countries.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

Political prisoners received unfair trials in 1998 in 35 countries.

### **DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL**

People were arbitrarily arrested and detained, or in detention without charge or trial in 66 countries.

### **DEATH PENALTY**

Executions were carried out in 36 countries

Prisoners were under sentence of death in at least 77 countries.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS**

Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, torture and hostage-taking in 37 countries.

## 10) The Money

Amnesty International's funding reflects the movement's independence and its reliance on broad public support. No funds are sought or accepted from governments for Amnesty International's work investigating and campaigning against human rights violations. The hundreds of thousands of donations that sustain this work come from the pockets of its members and the public and organisations such as trusts, foundations and companies.

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 movement's international public information, campaigning and development activities.

During the 12 months to 31 March 1999 the International Secretariat had expenditure of £16,899.000 in the following areas:

Research and Action	6,769.000
Campaigning	1,741.000
Publications and Translation Costs	2,256.000
Human Rights Education & Promotion	1,096.000
International Meetings	300.000
Administrative Costs of:	
Finance, Planning, Audit & Depreciation	1,012.000
Human Resources	1,071.000

*Information Technology* 603.000

*Facilities Costs & General Administration* 2,052.000

*In addition relief payments to victims of human rights violations and their families totalled £289,000 during this period.*

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