

AI Index: ORG 10/03/97

Distr: SC/PO

-----  
Amnesty International

Secretariat

8DJ

13 June 1997

International

1 Easton Street  
London WC1X

United Kingdom

FIGURES ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

AND ITS WORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

FACTS AND

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 1,000,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in more than 100 countries and territories and 4,287 local Amnesty International groups registered with the International Secretariat, in addition to the many thousands of school, university, professional and other groups which do not normally register internationally.
- There are nationally organized sections in 54 countries, 33 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 300 permanent staff 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.

## 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.

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.

### At the end of May 1997

Amnesty International takes **long-term action** on all the concerns reflected in its mandate, including prisoners of conscience. At the beginning of June 1997 Amnesty International groups were working on 1983 different current and medium-term action dossiers. These concern more than 4,570 individual victims where Amnesty International knows the names of those who suffered violations of their human rights. In over 1,500 instances Amnesty International does not have full information about all the victims' names, but the organization is doing all it can to take up these cases as well.

Rapid action for prisoners and others who are in immediate danger, such as torture or execution, is mobilized by the **Urgent Action** network of around 80,000 volunteers in some 85 countries. They are organized through electronic mail, fax, courier, express and airmail to send fast appeals on behalf of those at risk.

In the first five months of 1997, 235 new actions on 75 countries were issued to the Urgent Action Network. Further appeals on existing actions were requested 159 times, making a total of 394 occasions on which the network was activated. Each Urgent Action or a follow-up can generate hundreds of appeals to the authorities within days of being issued and several thousand within a few weeks.

The new actions covered a variety of concerns: prisoners whom it was feared might be tortured; those at risk of, or who had been the victim of, extrajudicial execution or "disappearance"; prisoners sentenced to death; and people who had been harassed or had received death threats from agents of the state or armed opposition groups. 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.)

-- **Medical office details:** the Amnesty International network of health professionals numbered around 10,000 members, organized in medical groups and networks in some 30 countries. An International Action by Health Professionals which commenced in May 1996 continued through into 1997. An initial report on the role of health professionals in documenting and speaking out against human rights violations was published in 1996, Prescription for Change. This is available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Dutch and German. It was followed by reports examining the role of health professionals in the documentation of human rights abuses in given countries.

- Israel and the Occupied Territories (the silence of prison doctors aware of abuses in detention facilities)
- Brazil (possibilities for the separation of forensic medicine from the police authorities)
- Turkey (the role which the Medical Association has played in drawing attention to abuses)
- Kenya (the problems of ill-treatment and the lack of medical care in custody)

Several Amnesty International field missions in recent months have included doctors. Among these have been the sending of observers to trial hearings of staff members of the Turkish Human Rights Foundation which runs programs for the care of torture victims. There have also been field missions to Kenya, Brazil and Israel and the Occupied Territories, and a delegation is due to visit South Africa in June to attend hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's hearing of the role of medical professionals in human rights violations of the past, protecting the victims of those violations or contributing to the violations

In addition to this medical campaign, regular medical actions have also been issued on a further 15 countries.

-- There are 23 **Regional Action Networks** (RANs), for example the SAN covers Southern Africa and CARRAN covers the Caribbean, whose members focus on campaigning against a wide variety of human rights violations in their chosen region. This year, up to the end of May, 80 regular RAN Actions were issued and 30 Update Actions. During this period there were 2,275 local groups participating in RANs.

-- Amnesty International issued 48 **major documents** on human rights violations on 35 countries including: lack of human rights protection during mass repatriation in Rwanda; the death penalty in Africa; impunity and human rights violations in Guatemala; intimidation and imprisonment in Myanmar; official sanctions for killings in Manipur, India; public executions in North Korea; torture in Russia; women targeted for human rights violations in Egypt.

-- From January to the end of May 1997 the organization sent 53 **delegations** to 35 countries. 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, Armenia, Germany, India, Pakistan, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Haiti, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, USA, Kenya, Swaziland, Uganda, Qatar, Tunisia, and Israel and The Occupied Territories and the Palestinian Authority.

## **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 **1997 annual report**, which detailed abuses during 1996, is indicative of the kinds and levels of abuses against people every year. According to that report:

### **EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS**

- Thousands of extrajudicial executions or possible extrajudicial executions were reported in at least 69 countries of the region including Algeria, Colombia, India, Somalia and Turkey.

### **“DISAPPEARANCES”**

- The fate of hundreds of thousands of people in at least 39 countries who “disappeared” in recent years, including 1996, remains unknown. Many of those, in countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi and Rwanda, Colombia, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Venezuela, may have subsequently been killed.

### **TORTURE OR ILL-TREATMENT**

- Tens of thousands of detainees were subjected to torture or ill-treatment, including rape, in at least 124 countries, including Egypt, Myanmar, Russian Federation and Nigeria.
- Several hundred people died as a result of torture in custody or inhuman prison conditions in at least 46 countries, including Cameroon, India, Libya, Venezuela, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

### **PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE**

- Prisoners of conscience or possible prisoners of conscience were held in at least 94 countries, including Afghanistan, Equatorial Guinea, Greece, Peru, and Tunisia.

### **UNFAIR TRIALS**

- More than 39 countries, including Burundi, China, Greece, Israel and the Occupied Territories, and Peru imprisoned people after unfair trials.

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

- At least 78 countries, including China, Iraq, Russian Federation, Rwanda, and Venezuela held tens of thousands of people without charging them with any crime.

## **DEATH PENALTY**

- Thousands of people were known to have been executed in at least 41 countries including China, Iraq, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America, although Amnesty International believes the real figure to be far higher.
- Amnesty International documented the cases of thousands of people who were sentenced to death in 58 countries, including Algeria, China, Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ukraine. The organization believes the true figure to be much higher.
- Thousands of prisoners remained under sentence of death in 48 countries, including Morocco and Western Sahara, Philippines, Russian Federation, Uganda, and United States of America.
- In 1996, Belgium abolished the death penalty in its entirety, while two countries extended the scope of the death penalty -- Libya and Guatemala.

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

- Armed opposition groups committed abuses including torture, hostage taking and deliberate and arbitrary killings in at least 38 countries, including Algeria, Burundi, Colombia, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom.

## **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;
- 138 governments are now party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and 136 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;
- 92 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;
- 30 states are now party 2nd Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;

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

-- 130 states are party to the Refugee Convention and  
129 states are party to the Refugee Protocol

## **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 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 1997 the International Secretariat had expenditure of £16,144,000 in the following areas:

Research and action	£5,982,000
Campaigning	£1,293,000
Publications & Translation costs	£ 2,248,000
Human Rights Education & Promotion	£ 1,018,000
International Meetings	£ 637,000
Administration Costs of:	
Finance, Accounting, Planning	£1,147,000
Human Resources	£ 984,000
Information Technology	£ 529,000
Facilities costs & general Administration	£2,306,000

In addition relief payments to victims of human rights violations and their families totalled £224,000 during this period.