

AI Index: ACT 60/02/95
@UA NEWS
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Pictured left are five of the many women around the world who have been the subject of UA appeals during 1995. As the Fourth UN World Conference on Women got underway in Beijing, cases such as theirs served as a sharp reminder to governments as AI focused world attention on the facts about human rights violations against women.

Illustrative cases of 22 women, several of whom have been the subject of UAs, were raised in Beijing by AI delegates. Many signatures were obtained on petitions for nine of them, including Eren Keskin, Samira Karrar and Park Yong-gil, and on 8 September handed simultaneously to embassies in Beijing of the countries of which the nine are nationals. Also, in a public demonstration on 1 September, AI delegates unfurled a "washing line" from which were hanging t-shirts each emblazoned with a large photo of one of the women.

WOMEN UNDER ATTACK

Urgent Actions and the Fourth UN World Conference on Women

The UA Network became more directly involved with events in Beijing when the Chinese authorities began a campaign of executions prior to the Conference to "ensure public order" in the capital. Thousands of appeals were sent by the Network condemning the executions and demanding a halt to them.

Then well-known human rights campaigner Ding Zilin was arrested and a UA was launched calling for her release, seeking assurances that no other dissidents would be arrested in connection with the Conference.

Since the Conference began in late August, still more women around the world have become the subject of international UA appeals: two women in Colombia threatened with death and warned not to testify in an investigation into the "disappearance" of a relative; a Guatemalan law student under surveillance by security force agents and believed to be at risk of abduction; a young woman threatened that she might not see her two-year-old son again as she is taken off into unacknowledged police custody in Turkey; a mother facing execution in Indonesia. Their cases illustrate still further how governments must pay more than just lip service to the human rights of women in their countries.

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CAPTIONS (page 1):

TURKEY: Eren Keskin, lawyer, prisoner of conscience.

SUDAN: Samira Karrar, at risk for human rights campaigning.

MOROCCO: Khadija Benameur, trade unionist prisoner of conscience.

GUATEMALA: Débora Guzmán Chupén, trade unionist under threat.

SOUTH KOREA: Park Yong-gil, 76, prisoner of conscience.

Rights denied: Ding Zilin.



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This man stated in an affidavit that, during 56 days in Israeli custody, he was hit, violently shaken and subjected to other forms of torture (UA 99/95). Khaled Farraj's statement reinforces AI's fears about torture in Israel's detention centres. However, in replies to UA Network appeals on his case and others, the Israeli authorities continue to evade the issue of torture. It is time for some straight answers. See page 3...

Street Action For 10 days in June, the Austrian Section ran an Urgent Action "fax-stand" in central Vienna (photo above). With four fax machines available on the stall, passers-by in the busy shopping street could stop and send instant appeals on the latest Urgent Actions issued from London.

"Last week, more than 500 members (of AI) wrote letters to senior government officials, arguing that the death penalty has never been a deterrent to crime..." The full-page article (below) in Nigerian magazine *Newsweek* (28/8/95) went on to describe some of those letters, sent to the Nigerian authorities and copied to *Newsweek* by AI activists. Another Lagos publication, *TheWeek*, also continues to regularly publish AI appeal letters, adding to the pressure on the Nigerian authorities.

AI Junior Urgent Action, as produced by the British Section (see back page).

If you want more information about the Junior AI Network, please contact:

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POUNDING THE ISSUE "There is no doubt whatsoever about the cause of death and it's very clear that he has died from unnatural causes and that he has died from torture..." (Derrick Pounder, professor of forensic pathology)

Derrick Pounder's statement, made after he had participated in the autopsy of Palestinian prisoner 'Abd al-Samed Harizat, who died in Israeli custody on 25 April 1995, has increased AI's fears about torture in Israel's detention centres. It also reaffirms the importance of recent UAs on behalf of Palestinian detainees, which have sought to protect such prisoners from torture and ill-treatment and to obtain clarification about procedures followed by interrogators. Disappointingly, in their replies to the UA Network, the authorities, specifically the Foreign Relations and International Organizations Department, have busied themselves in sidestepping AI's concerns.

Take, for example, the case of

Ahmad Ibrahim Sa'id. Arrested in June 1994, he alleged that he had been tortured during interrogation. He made similar allegations when his interrogation resumed in late September, and was believed to still be at risk of torture when a UA was issued in November, calling for an investigation into his allegations and for a halt to the torture of anyone in Israeli custody.

In what is now standard procedure, the authorities duly issued a "fact sheet" to UA activists, in which they gave their usual description of the Islamic opposition group *Hamas*, and Ahmad Sa'id's alleged involvement with it. In fact, the UA had not disputed the government's right to bring to justice anyone who has committed criminal acts, but was based purely on AI's concerns about torture. The "fact sheet" neither confirmed nor denied the allegations of torture, but merely stated, as do many of the replies from the Israeli authorities, that "it was found upon investigation that there had been no breach of the interrogation guidelines".

It is precisely the latter which are at the heart of AI's concerns - secret guidelines which permit the use of "moderate physical pressure" by Israeli interrogators. Fears as to what this phrase may actually mean in practice were heightened in late 1994 after reports that officials had sanctioned the use of "increased physical pressure" during the interrogation of suspected *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad members (UA 427/94). Disturbingly, this "exceptional dispensation" looked like becoming more routine after being given 3-month extensions in

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January and April 1995. In August, after a heated debate on the ethics of torture, particularly the shaking of detainees during interrogation, the special 4-man ministerial committee (reportedly now split 2:2) again extended the guidelines, until October, and allowed shaking with the special authorization of the head of the General Security Service. It was shaking that killed 'Abd al-Samud Harizat in April.

In the last year the Israeli authorities have arrested thousands of Palestinians, including actual and possible prisoners of conscience. Many have been held without access to lawyers for up to 30 days and without access to families for up to 140 days. As well as shaking, interrogation methods such as hoodings, beatings, "position abuse", and prolonged sleep deprivation have been officially authorized.

The fact is that such treatment amounts to torture, and torture violates Article 2 of the UN Convention Against Torture, which states that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture".

Torture is what the UN Network is concerned about in these UNs, and it is the issue that the Israeli authorities are evading in their replies. It is time for them to take their "fact sheets" out of the realm of a public relations exercise and into one of genuine communication about human rights. It is time for them to stop the torture.

CAPTIONS (page 5):

Death after torture: 'Abd al-Samud Harizat.



PROTECTING THE TRUTH-SEEKERS

The UfA Network's role in the fight against impunity in Latin America

The struggle for justice over impunity is one that goes to the very core of A's work. Even UfA activists, whose main aim is the immediate protection of those at risk of human rights violations, find themselves, in countless faxes and telegrams, urging governments to "bring the perpetrators to justice".

A familiar phrase then, the latter, but nonetheless one in which the human rights movement must maintain a dynamic and energetic belief. Otherwise it will be the perpetrators' familiarity with impunity which, unchallenged, will breed contempt for the law and human rights violations will spiral.

The fight against impunity in the longer term usually absorbs other sectors of A more fully than the UfA Network. But when pressure for justice pays off and official investigations into violations are initiated, UfA appeals may once again be needed. Because, in their attempts to avoid justice, perpetrators of human rights crimes will often threaten witnesses and others trying to uncover the truth about their misdeeds.

Hence, five public prosecutors and a judge in Brazil are threatened with death for their work to prosecute police officers implicated in a 1992 prison massacre (UfA 191/95) and a 1993 shanty town massacre (photo, left) (UfA 167/95). In Colombia, relatives of a woman who "disappeared" in 1992 are themselves subjected to death threats as security force agents face legal action (UfA 192/95), and a witness to two other "disappearances" is threatened as a police officer goes to trial (UfA 188/95). In Peru, a judge, a public prosecutor, a lawyer and victims' relatives are endangered by speaking out in favour of clarifying responsibility for massacres in 1991 and 1992 (UfA 146/95). In Guatemala, a woman is threatened for trying to find out what happened to her husband who "disappeared" in 1992 (UfA 131/95). And in Honduras, members of a family believe death threats against them aim to stall investigations into the murder of their relative, himself killed apparently to prevent information about military abuses coming to light (UfA 73/95). In all these cases, the UfA Network has sought to protect individuals whose involvement, accidental or chosen, in the search for justice has put their own lives at risk.

Brazilian youth Wagner dos Santos is another such person. Witness to the "Candelaria Massacre" of eight street children in Rio de Janeiro in July 1993 (UfA 241/93), in which he himself was seriously wounded, Wagner and nine named child witnesses have since been the subject of thousands of UfA appeals during 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Based mainly on Wagner's testimony, three military police officers face trial for the killings. The UfA Network was brought in again when, as a result of his courageous stand, Wagner suffered repeated death threats and another attempt on his life (UfA 440/94). The combination of the pressure generated by the Network's appeals and media coverage given to an A delegation meeting Wagner in hospital, led to improved medical treatment and a greater level of state protection for him. A continues to press for even fuller measures to guarantee Wagner's health and safety, which are still of serious concern.

The passage of time does not diminish the need for the truth to emerge and help heal the traumas of the past and prevent human rights violations in the future. As Emilio Mignone, a lawyer and human rights activist whose daughter was "disappeared" by the Argentine army in 1976, has said: "the truth is the only thing that can bring Argentina peace and freedom". Even now, 12 years after the end of military rule there, the "dirty war" continues to have repercussions which can make calls upon the UfA Network. In March 1995, UfA 84/95 was issued on behalf of Maria Alejandra Bonafini, daughter of the president of the human rights organization Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, after she received death threats. The latter came in the context of denunciations by relatives of the "disappeared" after a former naval officer made statements that "disappeared" detainees were sedated and thrown naked from aircraft into the ocean.

The importance of international appeals during attempts to bring perpetrators to justice is illustrated by a letter sent to UfA activists from Argentinian lawyer Federico Alfredo Huber, facing intimidation to force him to stop investigating a 1994 death in custody (UfA 123/94)

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"It is my pleasure to write to you to express my sincere thanks for your words of support and help which resulted in my receiving proper protection... Apart from the personal protection, I should say that your words of encouragement and the support I have received from people like yourself from many different countries has encouraged me in my efforts to clarify the circumstances surrounding the death of Diego Rodríguez Laguarda. It is gratifying to know that in situations such as the one in which I now find myself, I am not alone and that there are many people who are concerned that cases like that of Diego do not go unpunished. There is still a long, hard way to go... there are many powerful interests at work to ensure that the death of Diego remains unsolved."

CAPTIONS (pages 4-5)

Vigário Geral massacre, Brazil 1995, residents lit candles near victims' bodies. In July 1995, UN issued to protect public prosecutors under threat for trying to uncover the perpetrators.

Still searching for the truth about the "disappeared" - mothers demonstrate in Buenos Aires.

Members of ASFAPDES, Colombian human rights group, threatened as they pressed for a "disappearance" law, including measures against impunity (EXTRAF 54/94).

NEWS IN BRIEF

TURKEY

On 26 April 1995, AI received a message from lawyer Mahmut Sakar, released on 17 April, after a long UI campaign on behalf of him and other human rights activists:

"We were imprisoned for more than four months in connection with a report we had prepared following research into human rights violations in our region. Our trial for this book continues.

During this time, news of your efforts could not overcome the stone walls of the prison and reach us directly. Nevertheless, through various channels, we learned of your actions. In the conditions under which we were living, the support you showed for us meant a great deal, and became an important psychological strength in meeting the various difficulties in the course of our struggle... We greet you with affection and respect in the name of all our friends here, and wish you success in your work." (UI 450/94).

SAUDI ARABIA

The authorities have been feeling the full weight of the UI Network's outrage at the alarming number of executions in Saudi Arabia.

UI 96/95 has been widely reported in the media, lending additional force to activists' appeals (Reuters, Le Monde, the Times (UK), the Guardian (UK), and the Arabic papers *al-Quds* and *al-Arab*). It provoked a debate on the BBC World Service between a government official and an IS researcher, and the concerns raised by the UI were also broadcast on various European radio stations.

The UI was updated in August after 4 Turkish nationals were executed and 40 others faced possible execution. The UI again gained wide media coverage, particularly in Turkey.

The authorities have so far reacted defensively. The Interior Minister is quoted as saying "we apply the laws of God and don't pay attention to whoever says anything about that." There have now been over 150 executions since January. AI continues the pressure to put a stop to them.

TAIWAN

The UI Network joined Taiwanese lawyers, parliamentarians, and NGOs in calling on the authorities not to execute Su Chien-ho, Liu Ping-lang and Chuang Lin-hsiung, on death row in Taiwan.

The pressure seemed to have paid off when the executions were postponed in late May on the orders of the Minister of Justice, who expressed doubts about "certain points regarding the court's handling of their cases". However appeals were relaunched in September when AI learned that the three were once again facing execution. Urgent appeals for clemency are continuing (UI 76/95).

MEXICO

"Thank you for the support you have shown us through the letter you sent to the Mexican authorities to put an end to the acts of intimidation against members of CíADHAC (Citizens for Human Rights)... We know that your support, together with that of other concerned people and groups, has already led to a noticeable decrease in hostility.

*On the other hand, your support encourages our work team to pursue its efforts in the state of Nuevo León, so that every man, woman and child be offered a listening ear, respect and care, as well as to promote thereby a more humane world. **We send you a huge hug...**" (UI 105/95)*

THAILAND

On 14 June, UI 156/95 was issued for refugee Maung Ryan, alerting the UI Network to the urgent situation concerning his health. The UI Network called for him to be moved from the Immigration

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Detention Centre in Bangkok to a more suitable location as a matter of urgency so that he could receive appropriate health care. Two weeks later, AI learned that, after receiving many international appeals, the Prime Minister's Office in Bangkok was intervening personally in the case. Many AI participants received the following reply from the Thai authorities:

"... I wish to inform you that the Government of Thailand sincerely took note of Amnesty International's concern for Mr Maung Ryan, and, on humanitarian grounds, has approved transfer of him and his family to the Manxelo Student Safe Area in Ratchaburi province"

BURKINABÈ

Many received a reply from the Burkinabè authorities about two students shot dead during a demonstration in May:

"I am pleased to be able to inform you that... following this tragedy, the government set up a Commission of Inquiry to establish who was responsible with a view to bringing them to justice... I wish to assure you that the punishment reserved for those responsible for these reprehensible acts will be appropriate to the crime and what is to be expected in a state of law.. (AI 114/95)

TURKEY

Not so constructive has been the response received by some AI activists who have sent appeals to Turkish officials. They have been sent a glossy 72-page book, filled with pictures of mutilated bodies of children, women and men, allegedly killed in attacks by the armed opposition in Turkey.

No letter accompanies the book, entitled "PKK and the Message to Humanity", the aim of which presumably is to erode AI participant's desire to act on government abuses.

AI condemns human rights violations committed by governments and non-governmental entities alike. However, violations by one side in a conflict do not justify violations by the other, as the book attempts to imply.

AI hopes that when any authorities receive letters of genuine concern from people appealing for the respect of international human rights standards, they will fully address the concerns raised, rather than engage in simplistic propaganda.

TUNISIA

In July 1995, Najib Flosni, human rights lawyer, still held in pre-trial detention, beyond the 14-month limit allowed under Tunisian law, was awarded an honorary law degree by the USA-based Dickinson School of Law, in recognition of his work. In early August, he was awarded the International Human Rights Award by the American Bar Association in recognition of his "extraordinary contributions to the causes of human rights, the rule of law, and promotion of justice." It is to be hoped that the Tunisian authorities come to recognize the rule of law in his case and bring him to trial or release him immediately. (AI 236/94).

MOROCCO

"... this letter-writing is a very, very efficient way to put pressure on such regimes... because it embarrasses them... makes them think twice before it does something bad to the prisoner... it's like an eye watching inside the country... in Morocco, it works - it works - IT WORKED."

"Amnesty International intervened when we had hunger-strikes and sent emergency letters (AI 88/88, April 1988) to the authorities - it did help us, it did help us and made the Minister of Justice accept to negotiate with us and sometimes they could accept to make our life better inside the prison..." (August 1995 - Mohamed El Boukili (above), Moroccan teacher freed in 1994).

USA



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"My sincerest thanks to the Amnesty International Urgent Action Team and staff for all your efforts for my brother, Ronald R. Allridge, who was executed on June 8, 1995. My family thanks you, and I thank you". (see EXTR 59/95)

This message came, in a card made by himself (above), from James V. Allridge. He, too, is on death row in Texas.



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JUNIOR URGENT ACTION

In January 1993, the ÚA team at the British Section issued its first "Junior Urgent Action". Every month since then, it has rewritten one ÚA into simple language and large type, printed it up with a map and other country information, and mailed it out to a network of children in the UK and other countries.

The network is flourishing: whereas the first Junior ÚA went to some 65 addresses, this figure has now grown to over 600 monthly recipients.

The British Section also send their Junior ÚAs to other ÚA Sections - Ireland, Bermuda, Hong Kong, Sierra Leone, Israel, Mexico and Germany receive them as do schools in Tanzania, Slovenia and Portugal. There are similar schemes operating in AUSA (where the idea was first pioneered in the 1980s) and in Canada and Jamaica, so the children's network is fast becoming as international as its adult counterpart.

Junior ÚAs are aimed at children aged 8-12 years old and are distributed to an adult, eg a parent or a teacher, who will supervise the writing of appeal letters. A written guide gives the adults ideas about utilizing Junior ÚAs in geography and art lessons. Cases will involve some element with which children may be able to identify, such as other children, teachers and families, and issues raised concentrate on non-political matters of humane treatment and basic human rights. Graphic details of torture are never included. At the end of the year, all participants receive a certificate to which their name can be added.

"Alternative" Junior ÚAs are issued from time to time. In June 1993 the children appealed on behalf of Magda Hildauro Maguiña Campuzano, a 14-year-old schoolgirl in Peru who had "disappeared". Happily, Magda later reappeared alive and a follow-up action was issued asking the children to design their own greetings cards and send them to Magda.

Children bring a simple, direct language to appeal writing. One young boy, writing to the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro on behalf of street children, wrote: "You are the father of all the children of Rio, please look after your children."

CAPTIONS (page 8):

British Section poster, painted by 9-year-old.

Junior ÚA letter-writers on town carnival float.

Appeal for 16-year-old South African Michael Mathé.

