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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ADOPTS LJUBLJANA ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVED  
PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF  
WOMEN

Amnesty International has set the agenda for its struggle to combat massive abuses of human rights to the end of the century at its biannual International Council Meeting (ICM) held in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

"We have now set the stage for renewed and dynamic activism on the part of our million members worldwide to take on the major threats to human rights in the years ahead," said Pierre Sané, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

In adopting the four-year Ljubljana Action Plan, Amnesty International will now step up its campaigning to respond to human rights crises, oppose indiscriminate killings in armed conflicts and move ahead in its work on the violation of the human rights of women.

That campaigning was put into action during the 10-day meeting -- taking place near the borders of the conflict in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina -- when 400 Amnesty International activists held a demonstration as part of a Worldwide Day of Action on Bosnia and adopted the Ljubljana Declaration calling for action on the continuing human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia.

"We have heard this past week from mothers and fathers of people who "disappeared" years ago in the former Yugoslavia. We have seen the toll of human suffering exacted right now as the fighting continues. And we have made a commitment to the victims that we will speak out, we will take action and we will not forget the perpetrators," said Mr Sané.

At the Ljubljana ICM, Amnesty International has extended its policies on armed conflicts to oppose indiscriminate killings by governments and armed opposition groups. The human rights organization will now work to protect civilians who are killed in armed conflict situations where no effort is made to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

"The global human rights reality is that civilians are increasingly raped, kicked and mutilated in wars and civil conflicts, often on a massive scale," Mr Sané said. "The world cannot tolerate this carnage."

On the eve of the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing, the human rights activists from more than 70 countries have made a major commitment to strengthen Amnesty International's work against the human rights violations of women.

"The message on the human rights of women that we took to the streets of Ljubljana this week -- and will take to Beijing in two weeks -- is a sign of the campaigning action ahead," Mr Sané said.

As part of its ongoing work to promote all human rights, Amnesty International will now be urging governments to uphold human rights standards that are relevant to eradicating the practice of female genital mutilation. The organization believes that governments that fail to take appropriate action to end this practice violate international human rights standards.

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