
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 37/95

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **CAMPAIGN ON WOMEN**

** THE NOTE BELOW WILL BE SENT OUT WITH THE NEWS RELEASE BY THE IS:

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The launch of Amnesty International's campaign on women will be carried out by the organization's national sections over the course of 7 and 8 March, with press conferences at other events taking place at different times in those countries.

For international agencies and broadcast networks, the material can be distributed from 0001 hrs gmt 7 March onwards.

**URGENT - PLEASE NOTE: Several press officers have expressed an interest in having an audio-tape of the Women & Human Rights ENR sound-track to give to radio stations. We can organize this for you if you would like, though we will have to charge you the small cost of stock and copying. Please let Paula (Ext: 5560) know by Friday this week (24 Feb) if you would like an audio tape of this, answering the following questions: Do you want the original sound-track (including all background sounds and interviews in original languages) without the English commentary? OR do you want the English commentary without the original sound-track? Do you want the audio-tape format to be DAT (approx £24) or ordinary audio cassette (approx £2 - and I believe most radio stations can use this format)?

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Iraqi Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) - 28 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 266 & 35/95
Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95

Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

** RWANDA - 6 April ** This news release ties in with the 1st anniversary of the massacres and will highlight long-term detentions. Campaigners will also receive appeal cases, which may be mentioned in the news release.

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

** CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH ** The news release will address issues such as discrimination against ethnic Vietnamese; the complete impunity of the security forces; illegal detentions; abductions; and even a case of cannibalism. The news release will be targeted to international media attending the Cambodia Donors Conference in Paris.

EVENTS AND MISSIONS

NB: The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April The focus of the research will be on women which will tie in with the Campaign on Women.

MISSION TO BURUNDI 27 February - 14 March

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WOMEN "INVISIBLE" VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

On International Women's Day, Amnesty International is spotlighting women as the "invisible victims of the 1990s" -- with "hidden" violations of their rights often rising out of deeply-rooted discrimination, repression of their activism, and bloody wars and conflicts.

Launching a major worldwide campaign to put the human rights of women on the public and government agenda in the run up to a United Nations Conference on Women in September, the organization said that governments which pay little more than lip service to these rights must be pushed into action.

"So far governments have more or less ignored human rights violations against women -- and sometimes effectively given a green light to torture or rape by their police or soldiers," Amnesty International said.

"Governments are now sending worrying signals that they want to limit -- rather than promote -- women's civil and political rights at the UN conference."

In its campaign -- which will include petitions to governments worldwide -- Amnesty International is calling on those governments to put in place a 15-point plan to promote and protect women's human rights, including:

- the UN Conference on Women should formally recognize government responsibility for all human rights violations against women by their forces, acknowledge that all international human rights standards apply to women, and propose concrete action for promoting and preventing violations of women's human rights

- individual governments should safeguard the rights of women during armed conflict, and stop rape, sexual abuse and other torture or ill-treatment by government agents

- individual governments should end "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions of women and end persecution because of family connections

Those recommendations rise out of a 135-page report released at the start of its campaign, in which Amnesty International highlights the three key areas where women's human rights are most at risk: during wars and conflicts, when repressed because of their activism, and stemming from discrimination against women.

- Women and war -- in wars and civil conflicts women are often targeted for reprisal killings and are singled out for rape and sexual assault --

which has become a weapon of war. Women fleeing conflicts make up 80 per cent of the world's refugee population: sexual favours are often the price they must often pay to safely pass smugglers, border guards and security forces.

- Women as activists -- as lawyers or as political, trade union and other activists, women are imprisoned, tortured or killed not because of their gender but because they are seen as a political threat to governments. As women, however, they are often subjected to particularly vile forms of harassment, torture or ill-treatment.
- Women at risk -- discriminatory treatment of women in many countries means they are often more likely to suffer human rights violations than men and less likely to get public exposure for these abuses. Women are raped in custody, forced to take virginity tests by police, flogged for violating dress codes, and risk being stoned to death for so-called "sexual offenses".

"The backdrop for these violations is a world in which few countries treat their women as well as their men," Amnesty International said. "The discrimination against and vulnerability of women is exploited."

Women and children, for example, make up most of the casualties of war, most of the world's refugees and displaced people and most of the world's poor, the organization said.

Despite this government indifference to or repression of women's human rights, there has been a dramatic growth over the last 20 years in the number of organizations campaigning for women's rights.

Increasingly, women are standing up for their rights as political opponents, trade unionists, human rights activists, lawyers, and community activists. The spirit of their activism is captured by Dr Manorani Saravanamuttu, the mother of a journalist abducted and killed in Sri Lanka in 1990.

Even though she was told that she would also be killed if she spoke out, Dr Manorani has played a leading role in a mass movement of 25,000 mothers of Sri Lanka's "disappeared".

"They expect you to curl up in a corner and die of fear," she said in a 1991 interview. "The women are saying 'We are going mad with grief at home alone.' Now at least we are doing something."

ENDS\