

AI NEWSLETTER  
November '95 Focus  
Children

All over the world children are the innocent victims of brutality. Children have no right to vote and no political power and yet in country after country they are caught in the cross-fire of adult political conflict. Young people are tortured, often to force them to reveal information about their relatives; they are ill-treated, sometimes to make members of their families "confess" to alleged political offences; they are arbitrarily arrested and detained without trial. Children have died in the custody of police and security forces, and have been targeted for deliberate killings by government forces. In some countries they have been victims of the death penalty: killed by the same state authorities which should defend their rights.

But children do have rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 20 November 1989, is supposed to guarantee those rights. By April 1995, 172 states had become parties to the Convention -- the highest number of ratifications of any international human rights treaty. The Convention seeks to protect a wide range of social, economic and cultural rights, which AI seeks to promote as well as the rights to life, to liberty and freedom of expression, thought, conscience and association which are at the heart of AI's campaigning work. The Convention also prohibits discrimination, whether by reason of colour, sex, language, religion, ethnic origin, disability or political opinion and demands protection for children who are singled out for human rights violations because of their family's beliefs.

Although the vast majority of states have been keen to become party to the Convention, many fail to abide by their obligations. China ratified the Convention in 1992 and yet Tibetan children still face ill-treatment in custody. The United States of America (USA) signed it in 1995 and yet juvenile offenders are still on death row. Argentina ratified the Convention in 1990. However, a stronger political commitment to discovering what happened to the many children who "disappeared" during military rule (1976 to 1983) is needed. Burundi also ratified the Convention in 1990, but that did not prevent Richard Ntungiyabani being macheted and clubbed to death while soldiers stood by encouraging his killers, just because his family belonged to the Hutu ethnic group. Romania also ratified the Convention in 1990, but that did not stop a 15-year-old boy being beaten on the soles of his feet in police custody to force him to "confess".

All this does not undermine the Convention's significance - it is the most complete statement of children's rights ever made and is the first to give these rights the force of international law. Unfortunately, however, it does prove that words are not enough: they must be followed up with actions. The Convention is far-sighted because it recognizes that the children of today - half the world's population - will have to carry on into the future the work of creating a just and humane world. Respect for human rights begins with the way society treats its children. It is time that governments and political leaders recognized this, not just in theory, but in practice.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

During recent years Tibetan children, many of whom are novice monks and nuns, have been put in jail for peacefully speaking out about their beliefs. Chinese regulations forbid children under the age of 18 to register as monks or nuns, but many Tibetan juveniles settle in or near monasteries or nunneries without being registered, to receive a traditional Tibetan education and religious teaching. At least 45 children (34 boys and 11 girls) under the age of 18 who had been arrested in Tibet between 1991 and 1994, were still detained at the end of December 1994.

Tibetan children who are political detainees are often ill-treated or tortured. Former detainees have reported that they were whipped, kicked and beaten. Several Tibetan political detainees are reported to have died soon after their release. One such detainee was 12-year-old nun Sherab Ngawang, arrested along with four other nuns during a peaceful pro-independence demonstration outside Jokhang Temple, Tibet's holiest shrine, in Lhasa in February 1992. They were shouting: "Tibet is an independent country!" She was released in February 1995 after three years in a labour camp. Three

months later she died. According to information received by AI, Sherab Ngawang was beaten and ill-treated in detention, and was suffering from kidney malfunction and lung problems.

AI is calling for an inquiry into the death of Sherab Ngawang and urges the Chinese Government to respect its commitments to the children of China as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it ratified on 2 March 1992. Children in China, as elsewhere, must be protected by the law. They must not be tortured or ill-treated by the state.

“Disappearances” and the right to identity

Even babies have suffered violations of their human rights. During the period of military rule in Argentina, thousands of people “disappeared” after being taken into custody by members of the security forces. Valeria Beláustegui Herrera was two months pregnant when she “disappeared” on 13 May 1977. Neither Valeria nor the baby she was carrying have been heard from since.

Many women who “disappeared” during the period of military rule gave birth in secret detention centres. Their babies were taken away by members of the security forces who, in some cases, raised them as their own. The Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, an Argentine group searching for their grandchildren, has estimated that more than 200 children “disappeared” during the so-called “dirty war” of 1976 to 1983. Fifty-six of these children have been traced. Some have been returned to their blood relatives, while others have stayed with their adoptive parents. A number of cases in which custody is disputed are before Argentine courts.

The remaining children must be found. The relatives of the “disappeared” have the right to a full investigation into the fate of their loved ones. AI recommends that the Argentine Government should do whatever possible to clarify the fate of the “disappeared”. It should order a full investigation into recent public declarations made by former and present members of the security forces, which may provide clues about the fate of the “disappeared”. The authorities should undertake an immediate and exhaustive investigation into the fate of children born in captivity.

extrajudicial execution and deliberate and unlawful killing

Nisar Ahmad Mir, aged 13, from Bandipora, Baramulla, in Jammu and Kashmir in India, was arrested by members of the Border Security Force (BSF) on 9 May 1994 while smoking on the street. He was taken away in a van along with two older boys, allegedly for interrogation. All three were reportedly shot that evening. Their bodies were discovered later by a nearby roadside. The BSF alleges that the boys were shot dead in an encounter between security forces and members of an armed opposition group, and that weapons were recovered from them. The Indian Government has responded to AI’s inquiries about Nisar Ahmad Mir’s death by stating that the case is “under investigation”. However AI is concerned that the government has provided no details about the nature and progress of the investigation and that civil liberties groups in the state have recently denied that an investigation is being carried out.

The government should order an immediate and impartial investigation into Nisar Ahmad Mir’s death, make the findings public and ensure that those found responsible are brought to justice. Human rights training should be made compulsory for all police and security forces personnel in India so that they are made aware of the rights of detainees, particularly in relation to children.

In situations of armed conflict, even unarmed children can be seen as a threat. Eleven-year-old Fariq Tawfiq ‘Ali was one such child. Fighting broke out in Iraqi Kurdistan on 1 May 1994 between the armed forces of three Kurdish political parties. Widespread human rights abuses were perpetrated by all sides. According to reports, Fariq was arrested along with 10 other people on 5 May 1994, in the town of Halabja. They were arrested by members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan on suspicion of being members of opposition political parties. Over the next few days their bodies were discovered in various locations on the outskirts of the town.

AI is calling on the Kurdish administration to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the death of Fariq Tawiq 'Ali. Kurdish political parties must stop their forces carrying out unlawful and deliberate killings, and killing combatants after surrender or capture. Children should be protected at all times.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

In the Middle East, Palestinian children have frequently taken the lead in activities such as stone-throwing against the Israeli authorities and, as a result, have been targeted for arrest. The age of criminal responsibility was lowered to 12 in the Occupied Territories by Military Order in 1968 and there are around 170 children under the age of 16 in prison. Many suffer torture or ill-treatment in detention.

'Usama Jum'a Kayyali, aged 14, lives in Shufat Refugee Camp near Jerusalem. He was arrested on 23 April 1995 and taken to the Moscobiyah Detention Centre. 'Usama told his mother that he had been hit and punched during three days under interrogation to make him confess to throwing stones. He was reportedly taken to see a doctor three times.

AI is calling on the Israeli Government to investigate the allegations that 'Usama Jum'a Kayyali was beaten while in the custody of the General Security Service and to bring to justice anyone found to have taken part in the beatings. Precautions should be taken to prevent the torture of children in custody: children should only be questioned in the presence of a parent or next of kin. The government should pay compensation and assume the costs of rehabilitative medical and psychological care for children who have been tortured or ill-treated by the security services.

In Romania, Virgiliu Ilie', aged 15, was arrested on 15 January 1994, on suspicion of stealing cars. His mother visited him the next morning. She says he had blood on his face. Virgiliu alleges that during his interrogation, police officers beat his hands and the soles of his feet with rubber truncheons to force him to confess. Even though he was a child, Virgiliu was detained with adults in a police lock-up. He says he was beaten by his cell-mates, who told him they were obeying orders.

On 17 February 1994 the Mina Minovici forensic medical centre established that Virgiliu's "ability to reason was low". Despite this, he was not released. When his mother visited him a week later he had been moved to the Bucharest Penitentiary Hospital; he was diagnosed as suffering from anaemia and a bacterial skin infection. On 29 March 1994 Virgiliu Ilie' was released. He and his mother have made a complaint to the Military Prosecutor; they have not yet received an adequate reply.

AI is calling for a full and impartial investigation into Virgiliu Ilie'" allegations that he was ill-treated by police officers and beaten by cell-mates. An independent commission should conduct a full and impartial inquiry into the factors that contribute to the torture and ill-treatment of detainees by police officers in Romania and preventative measures should be recommended.

Refugees and children separated from families

The massacres in Rwanda which took place in 1994 claimed the lives of an estimated 300,000 children. Children were deliberately targeted by "death squads" because of their ethnic origin. Of those who survived the massacres, more than 90,000 were left orphaned, or with their parents "disappeared". Many children were escorted by adults into neighbouring countries where they settled in refugee camps.

Humanitarian agencies have attempted to reunite them with their relatives. AI is campaigning for the UN and the international community to assist the Rwandese Government in setting up fair trials and rebuilding the judicial system so that the perpetrators of the massacres can be brought to justice. AI has also been campaigning for governments to provide resources for the International Tribunal for Rwanda.

The prisons in Rwanda are overcrowded and conditions are cruel, inhuman and degrading. Hundreds of prisoners have died. Many prisoners are children who are accused of being involved in the massacres; many more are babies and children who are there with their mothers. Some say that they are being held in place of relatives.

When 12-year-old Augustin Minani was arrested in September 1994, soldiers reportedly told him that he was being taken instead of his brother, who they claim had murdered members of the Tutsi ethnic group. He was detained in a hut for four months and was beaten. He says he was forced to sign a confession to murder.

AI is calling on the Rwandese Government to make sure all possible safeguards are introduced to protect children in prison against ill-treatment. The government and the international community should continue to support the work of aid organizations caring for orphans. The authorities should accept the assistance of foreign judicial experts to conduct investigations and trials of those responsible for human rights abuses, including those who have committed abuses against children.

The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. For any state to commit such a coldly calculated human rights violation against its own children, is terrible. The execution of people for crimes committed under the age of 18 is prohibited by a number of international treaties which have the force of law. In spite of this, more than 20 countries have laws permitting the execution of juvenile offenders, flouting international law and international human rights standards.

AI works for the abolition of the death penalty, for both adults and children. Execution is not only cruel, it is irreversible in the case of error and has never been shown to have a deterrent effect. Many of those who are sentenced to death have not received an adequate defence and have been medically proved to be suffering from mental illness and therefore not to have been responsible for their actions at the time of the crime. Children and adolescents are less responsible for their actions than adults, purely by reason of their immaturity. At the same time, they are more susceptible to rehabilitation and more capable of reform. For a state to seek legal vengeance through killing a child, is particularly inhuman.

And yet, several states have sentenced juvenile offenders to death in the last decade: Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the USA, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. All of these, except Saudi Arabia, have either ratified, acceded to or signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention established a minimum age of 18 at the time of the offence in its death penalty provisions. So did the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949. Apart from the disturbing human rights implications of executing juvenile offenders, there are also profound implications in the failure of states to act in accordance with their treaty obligations.

Those failing to abide by international law include one state which sees itself as a world leader. The USA accounts for the majority of documented executions of juvenile offenders in the world in recent years. Twelve states currently hold juvenile offenders on death row. Nine executions have been carried out in five states since 1985; four of those took place in 1993. All of those executed were 17 at the time of the offence.

Christopher Burger was executed in Georgia in 1993. He was 17 in 1977, at the time of the murder for which he was convicted, and was sentenced to death in 1978. At his trial he was represented by a lawyer who had not previously acted in a capital case. US juries are required to consider mitigating factors in deciding whether to impose a death sentence, but the jury in Christopher Burger's case was not told that he had a low IQ, was mentally ill and brain damaged from physical abuse he had suffered as a child, that he had had a highly disturbed and unstable upbringing and that he had attempted suicide at the age of 15. A doctor examined Christopher Burger in 1989 and found organic brain impairment and mental illness. In 1990 he received a last minute stay of execution on the issue of

mental competence at the time of the crime, but the appeal failed and he was executed on 7 December 1993, after 13 years on death row.

The killing of children must stop. AI urges all states to work towards abolition of the death penalty in law.

### **November '95 News**

**Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women:**

A clothes-line with 12 T-shirts emblazoned with the photos of 12 women victims of human rights violations was unfurled by AI campaigners on a street outside Beijing, China. Security officials and plainclothes men watched and filmed the event but did not intervene.

At a colourful, multicultural birthday party for a woman who could not be present, drummers and acrobats portrayed images of strength, endurance and courage – qualities embodied by Dr Ma Thida, a prisoner of conscience from Myanmar, spending her birthday in jail for the third time.

Lanterns lit up the streets in countries around the world as AI members brought their own human rights message to the traditional Chinese mid-autumn festival. Government delegates and participants at the forum of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were asked to wear black ribbons in remembrance of women whose human rights have been violated worldwide.

These were just a few of the events which helped AI to bring human rights violations against women before the eyes of the international community at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women. The Inter-governmental Conference took place in Beijing from 4 to 15 September; the NGO Forum, outside Beijing, from 30 August to 8 September. Human rights issues were on the agenda for the first time and AI used the opportunity to make a strong and clear statement that all women, wherever they live or whatever their circumstances, should enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

On their first day in Beijing, AI delegates set out the organization's demands for governments: to reaffirm the commitment to the universality and indivisibility of the human rights of women made two years ago at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna; to recognize that women suffer violence at the hands of the state, to try to end it and bring the perpetrators to justice; to state that rape in armed conflict is a human rights violation; to make a commitment to work towards eradicating violence, such as female genital mutilation, in family and society; to make a strong commitment to guaranteeing the human rights of women activists; and to step up efforts to ratify and implement international treaties that have an impact on the human rights of women.

To reinforce the message, AI sections and groups around the world joined in an International Day of Action during the final week of the Conference. In the Philippines, the day culminated in the lighting of 15 large candles in a public park to symbolize AI's 15 steps to protect women's human rights. In the Netherlands, pictures of women activists were placed alongside photographs of the general public to form a huge mural.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 15 September 1995, commits governments to taking concrete steps to halt human rights violations against women in times of peace and conflict. If translated into action these commitments could make a real improvement to the lives of women.

However, the double standards governments often employ were demonstrated by the behaviour of the host country, both in the run-up to and during the Conference. Sixteen people were executed in China before the delegates arrived. According to official sources this was in order to make Beijing safe for the international visitors. During the Conference the relatives of at least 10 prisoners of conscience and activists in China were placed under virtual house arrest to prevent contact with foreign nationals. Some participants at the NGO Forum were subjected to heavy-handed surveillance by security officials, which included listening to what participants were saying and taking pictures of them. AI protested against these measures.

AI will judge the ultimate impact of the Conference on whether governments ratify the human rights instruments and implement them in law and practice. The final test will be whether human rights violations against women decrease.

#### Nepal

These prisoners, held in Ilam district jail, are among 11 Christians sentenced in Nepal, on 21 August 1995, to two years' imprisonment for proselytizing. They include a Nepali national, an Indian national and nine Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees. AI believes them to be prisoners of conscience and is calling on the Government of Nepal to release them immediately and unconditionally.

#### Egypt

AI is concerned at the growing number of civilians targeted for assassination by armed opposition groups in Egypt. So far this year at least 31 civilians have been killed. From 17 to 30 August 1995, at least seven unarmed civilians were killed in Upper Egypt. AI is calling on armed opposition groups to stop deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians.

The dead include four farmers from Minya Governorate. On 17 August 1995 'Ala' Hassan 'Abdallah and Baha' Mohammad 'Abbas were shot dead by armed men in the village of Beni Obeid, and Fathi Mahmoud Mohammad was murdered on his farm in Mallawy. A week later Sa'id 'Abd al-Muttalib Hussain was murdered in al-Roda near Mallawy. The perpetrators were reportedly members of *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya*.

Armed men were also responsible for the deaths of 'Abd al-Nour Qatis Abu Sa'ada, a pharmacist, and his friend 'Issam Georgy Shahata, a doctor, and Fahmi Sadeq Tadros, a jeweller, on 29 and 30 August in Minya Governorate.

Since 1992 violent confrontation between armed Islamist groups, including *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* and *al-Gihad*, and the security forces, have claimed the lives of hundreds of people. Most of the victims have been members or sympathizers of these groups, and security and police officers.

AI calls on *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* and other Egyptian armed groups to end the deliberate killings of civilians.

Thousands of suspected members or sympathizers of banned Islamist groups have been arbitrarily detained and 48 have been executed after unfair trials by military courts since 1993. AI has urged the Egyptian Government to end the torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners and to stop the use of the death penalty. It has also criticized the practice of administrative detention of political detainees.

#### Uzbekistan

"On the day they released me from prison the Governor handed me some letters in English and said: 'These came a few months ago. They are probably about you. You've studied English - what do they say?'" This is how prisoner of conscience Pulatzhon (Pulat) Akhunov saw for the first time the work of AI on his behalf.

Pulatzhon Akhunov was the subject of a *Worldwide Appeal* in April 1994. He was released the following November under a special presidential amnesty. However, after his release he was the victim of continuing persecution by the authorities. He was interrogated by police after a meeting with a local human rights activist and a Moscow journalist who had worked for his release. His friends were questioned by police after meeting him and became afraid to see him. Unable to return to his old job as a teacher, he was thwarted by officials in his plans to start his own business. "I felt like I had exchanged one prison for another", he said.

In desperation, Pulatzhon left Uzbekistan and in August 1995, with the support of AI, he was granted political asylum in Sweden. He and his family are now beginning to build a new life. Motivated by his experiences as a prisoner, Pulatzhon dreams of one day training to become a lawyer.

#### Ecuador

CONSUELO BENAVIDES CEVALLOS was taken into custody and killed allegedly by Ecuadorian marines in December 1985. For almost 10 years Rosa Cevallos de Benavides, her 80-year-old mother,

together with her husband and their seven grown-up children, have fought to have those responsible brought to justice.

Throughout their struggle the Benavides family have faced repeated judicial delays. The trial of some of those implicated, which opened only last August, stands in danger of being closed without a verdict. Under Ecuadorian law, murder cases not resolved within 10 years of the commission of the crime may be shelved. This obstacle has not diminished the Benavides' resolve; they have vowed to take their case before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States. The campaign has cost them dearly. The family has been forced to sell their property. Two of the children claim they were unexpectedly dismissed from their posts in government-run institutions. Consuelo Benavides' sister, Nelly Benavides, has had her home burgled several times. On the last occasion she lost a computer with which she prepared campaign press releases and reports. After the last of these thefts, Nelly Benavides wrote to AI that she had been left "worried by the pain, suffering and impotence", and with a feeling of "real danger".

+ *Please write*, expressing concern that those responsible for Consuelo Benavides' death may escape punishment and urging that the Benavides family be given adequate protection, to: President Sixto Durán Ballén/ President of the Republic of Ecuador/ Palacio de Gobierno/ Quito/ Ecuador.

Nigeria

**CHRISTINE ANYANWU**, editor of a leading opposition newspaper in Nigeria, is believed to have been sentenced to life imprisonment after a secret and unfair trial by a Special Military Tribunal. She was one of four journalists apparently convicted for publishing articles about secret trials of alleged coup plotters. AI believes she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the non-violent expression of her political views, and is calling for her immediate and unconditional release. Human rights activists and pro-democracy activists are also reported to have been sentenced to long prison terms for reporting on the secret trials. On 14 July 1995 the Nigerian authorities announced that 40 defendants had been convicted by the Tribunal trying treason cases, in connection with an alleged coup attempt in March 1995. Two other women, **QUEENETT ALLAGOA** and **REBECCA O. IKPE**, were among those convicted in connection with the alleged coup attempt, and reportedly sentenced to terms of imprisonment. They were apparently convicted solely because of their personal relationships with army officers sentenced to death for treason.

The trials before the Special Military Tribunal have been grossly unfair. The Tribunal is, effectively, an arm of government rather than a court of law. It denies all crucial rights of defence, including the defendants' right to be tried in open court, to be defended by a lawyer of their own choice and to appeal to a higher and independent court.

+ *Please write*, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Christine Anyanwu, Queenett Allagoa, Rebecca O. Ikpe and all other prisoners of conscience imprisoned after being sentenced by the Special Military Tribunal, to: General Sani Abacha/ Chairman/ Provisional Ruling Council/ State House/ Abuja/ Federal Capital Territory/ Nigeria.

Iran

**PARI TAI**, a 66-year-old housewife and mother of six children, "disappeared" on 28 January 1990 and her fate remains unclear. According to reports received by AI, she was on her way to her son's flat at the same time as a demonstration was taking place in his neighbourhood in Tehran. Although she was not taking part in the protest, it is believed that Pari Taii was arrested along with others during the demonstration. All efforts by her family to discover her whereabouts have been unsuccessful. However, unconfirmed reports suggest that she may be held in Qasr Prison in Tehran. Pari Taii has a kidney complaint which requires medical attention. AI has received no response to its request for information about her whereabouts or legal status.

+ *Please write*, asking for information concerning the whereabouts of Pari Taii, and if she is being detained, for the date of her trial. If she has been tried, ask for details of the charges on which she was

convicted and her sentence. Ask for assurances that she is being humanely treated and given access to her family and medical care if necessary, to: His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani/ The Presidency/ Palestine Avenue/ Azerbaijan Intersection/ Tehran/ Islamic Republic of Iran.

#### Brazil

The Brazilian Government has officially recognized the death of 136 people who “disappeared” between 1961 and 1979 after being detained by state agents, and pledged to compensate their relatives. However, no attempt will be made to find out exactly what happened to them.

In September 1995 government-sponsored legislation established a Special Commission which, on request, will provide relatives with death certificates, decide on compensation for relatives of up to US \$150,000 and take steps to locate the remains of their loved ones. The Commission will also evaluate relatives’ claims in relation to people “who died of unnatural causes in police or similar precincts.”

However, on the eve of the vote, AI wrote to members of the Brazilian Congress expressing serious concern that the legislation failed to meet international human rights standards, by excluding any provisions for an investigation into the full facts surrounding these human rights violations.

The government, echoing the military’s view on this issue, argues that any such investigation is ruled out by Brazil’s 1979 Amnesty Law. AI opposes amnesties that prevent the full truth about human rights violations being established, and those responsible being brought to justice.

AI also expressed concern that provisions for locating the remains of the “disappeared” seemed to place the burden of proof on the relatives who had been kept in ignorance of the fate of their loved ones.

#### Sierra Leone

Unarmed civilians are the victims of a campaign of terror in the continuing conflict in Sierra Leone. They have been captured and held hostage, ill-treated and tortured, and deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Both government soldiers and rebel forces are responsible for these human rights abuses.

In a report published in September\* AI called on both government soldiers and rebel forces to stop the torture and deliberate and arbitrary killing of defenceless civilians. It also called for those responsible for these human rights abuses to be brought to justice.

The conflict began in 1991 and continued despite the overthrow of the government in a military coup in April 1992 which brought the National Provisional Ruling Council to power.

Since 1994 government soldiers have been increasingly implicated in killings of unarmed civilians which have officially been blamed on rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front. In some cases they have offered no protection to civilians against rebel attacks. Government forces have also been responsible for the torture and summary executions of captured rebels and people suspected of assisting or collaborating with rebels. In September 1994 a suspected rebel detained by government soldiers in the village of Bongor, Bo District, in Southern Province, died after his face, chest and abdomen were slashed with a knife.

Rebel forces have been responsible for torture and killings as well as the abduction of large numbers of civilians; some have been ill-treated and killed, others held as hostages. During a rebel attack on the town of Port Loko in Northern Province on 8 June 1995, four people died in their homes when they were set alight by rebel forces. At least another 20 civilians, including children, drowned in the river while trying to escape. More than one hundred people - including more than 50 schoolboys and girls - were reported to have been abducted. Their whereabouts and fate remain unknown.



Thousands have died in the conflict and many more thousands have been displaced, seeking refuge in the homes of friends or relatives, in displaced people's camps within Sierra Leone, or in neighbouring Guinea and Liberia.

Initiatives to bring peace to Sierra Leone must take human rights into account and any peace settlement in the country must include human rights guarantees.

\* See *Sierra Leone: Human rights abuses in a war against civilians* (AI Index: AFR 51/05/95).

#### Portugal

A prominent Portuguese lawyer has lodged a complaint with the Prosecutor General of the Republic claiming that he was violently assaulted by three police officers on 21 July 1995. Duarte Teives, who spent 24 hours in hospital recovering from his injuries, has himself been charged with a number of offences which he claims the police have concocted to explain their conduct. AI is seeking to establish whether an inquiry has been opened into his allegations of ill-treatment.

On the afternoon the incident took place, Duarte Teives drove his wife to her place of work at Lisbon City Council, in the Praça do Município, where she has an authorized parking place. He was trying to park his car when three Public Security Police (PSP) officers approached and told him that because of special traffic restrictions he could not park there. They asked to see his wife's pass, which she went to fetch from her office.

While she was gone, the officers ordered Duarte Teives to move his car. He refused, saying that the order was unlawful. According to his statement, he was seized and pushed roughly to the ground and then thrown violently into the back of the PSP car. One of the policemen kicked him repeatedly on his left lower leg, fracturing the fibula. Another kick was aimed at his testicles. He was also verbally abused. The assault was witnessed by a number of bystanders, including city officials.

On the way to the police station, he was slapped hard and repeatedly. He then spent the night in detention at various locations. Finally he was charged with refusing to obey orders, failing to give identification, causing damage to a vehicle and insulting authority.