

Upsurge in Political Killings in 1993

Political killings in Algeria spiralled alarmingly in 1993, after the state of emergency was renewed in February for an indefinite period.

Armed clashes between the security forces and opposition groups occurred almost daily over the year. At least 550 alleged armed Islamist militants were killed. Some may have been extrajudicially executed. Over 140 policemen and members of the security forces were also killed.

At the same time, civilians were increasingly the targets of kidnappings and deliberate killings, apparently carried out by armed Islamist militants. Djilali Belkhenchir, a 52-year-old human rights activist and paediatrician, was shot dead on 10 October. He was one of over 140 civilians, including journalists and members of the judiciary and local councils, killed apparently because of their public opposition to Islamic fundamentalism or their alleged support of the governmental authorities, whose legitimacy is vigourously denounced by leaders of illegal Islamist opposition groups. In September the range of victims widened to include foreign nationals living and working in Algeria. In two separate incidents, five foreigners -- all civilians -- were deliberately killed after having been abducted. Three others were kidnapped in October and later released unharmed.

Political violence in Algeria has claimed well over 1,600 lives since the second round of general elections was cancelled in January 1992. Amnesty International has called on the Algerian authorities to take measures to prevent human rights violations by security forces, including extrajudicial executions. It has also condemned hostage-taking and deliberate killings of civilians by opposition groups.

Burundi

The recent bloody coup attempt and dramatic events that took place in Burundi during the early hours of 21 October were witnessed by AI researcher Godfrey Byaruhanga and Franca Sciuto, the former Chair of AI's International Executive Committee. They were on an official visit to the country and were staying at the Novotel hotel, in the centre of the capital, Bujumbura, close to the Presidential Palace.

Godfrey said: "It was about 2am when I heard outbursts of gunfire and explosions which woke me up. Fully awake, I knew definitely there was a violent coup going on, though I couldn't tell what the reason for this was."

From his hotel window Godfrey watched troops in the street below. Between 2.30 and 3am he saw soldiers in red berets blockade the Boulevard de l'Uprona, which leads to the Presidential Palace. At 3am armoured personnel carriers moved up and down the boulevard. Although these did not fire shooting continued elsewhere until after 5am, especially around the Presidential Palace.

By 6 or 7am soldiers were guarding strategic points in the city. That evening Godfrey heard on Radio Burundi that a so-called National Council for Salvation had been set up, led by a Minister in the previous government. The next day he learned that President Melchior Ndadaye -- whose government had been elected by a huge majority in June -- plus several ministers, and the President and the Deputy President of the National Assembly, had all been murdered in cold blood at the barracks of the 11th Battalion.

Godfrey said: "These extrajudicial executions were very distressing to us, the more so because we had held talks with the slain government officials a day or so before their death."

In retaliation for the coup and execution of President Ndadaye and other officials, members of the slain President's majority Hutu ethnic group attacked and killed Tutsi villagers. In the days that followed, the Tutsi-dominated army killed or assisted Tutsi civilians to kill many Hutu, either in self-defence or in revenge attacks. Hutu civilians were murdered both in Bujumbura and in the provinces. The day after the coup at least 10 Hutu were shot in an attempt to disperse a peaceful demonstration in Bujumbura.

Surviving members of the government have re-emerged as the country's government, and have insisted that those responsible for the coup and the murder of the President and other officials will not be given an amnesty - as the coup leaders had demanded - and will be brought to justice.

By November, the killings of civilians, mainly Hutu, by security forces was continuing. AI has urged the government to take all possible action to stop the violence, to set up an independent inquiry into recent human rights violations and to bring those responsible to justice.

Zaire

Zairian asylum-seeker Omasese Lumumba was unlawfully killed by staff at Pentonville prison, London, when "improper methods and excessive force in the process of control and restraint", were used according to the findings of an inquest jury in July 1993. In December the Crown prosecution Service decided that no charges would be brought against ant prison staff due to insufficient evidence.

Omasese Lumumba was the nephew of Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of what is now Zaire, who was murdered in 1961. He sought asylum in England in September 1991 and was detained. From 19 September until his death on 8 October 1991, he was locked in a prison cell for more than 20 hours a day and was in a depressed and anxious state. Omasese Lumumba died when prison staff involved pinned him to the floor during a struggle to forcibly remove his clothing. According to the prison doctor, the prison officers continued to restrain him even after his body had gone limp.

AI has urged the government to initiate an independent and impartial public inquiry into the death in custody of Omasese Lumumba, and to revise asylum procedures in conformity with international standards. (See Eur 45/13/93)

Jamaica

A crucial decision by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) in London in November should save the lives of many death row prisoners across the Caribbean.

The JCPC, which is the final court of appeal for a number of Caribbean countries, commuted the death sentences of two Jamaican prisoners to life imprisonment and ruled that the prolonged detention of inmates on death row in Jamaica for more than five years constituted cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The two had been on death row for 14 years.

Four Jamaican death row prisoners, including two who would have had their death sentences commuted following the JCPC's ruling, were shot dead by prison warders at St Catherine's District Prison, near Kingston, at the end of October. Two of the four had been among 26 prisoners named in a recent communication sent to AI from a Jamaican source which said that they feared reprisals from prison warders after alleging ill treatment of prisoners. AI is calling on the Jamaican Government to hold a full and impartial inquiry into the killings,

as well as an inquiry into the complaints of ill treatment and alleged threats made to other inmates at the prison in recent months.

Guatemala

Imprisoned former soldiers in the Guatemalan army who promised to implicate top military personnel in "death squad" operations are now living in fear of their lives.

In an extraordinary news conference held on 11 October 1993 at Guatemala City's Pavoncito prison, two ex-soldiers, Francisco Solbal Santay and Tiburcio Hernández Hernández -- sentenced to long prison terms for the murder of American citizen Michael Devine in 1990 -- declared that higher military officials had ordered them to carry out that killing and approximately 50 others, as part of their work in a military death squad.

They described how persons considered "subversive" by the army were tortured with electric shocks during interrogation by agents from G-2, military intelligence, and then stabbed or strangled to death and their bodies disposed of in clandestine cemeteries. They also stated that they would name those involved.

But they now say they had "lied", and have withdrawn their testimonies, apparently after threats from the army high command.

They, and four other convicted former soldiers, who made similar allegations but subsequently retracted them (after some reportedly were bribed), as well as common law prisoner Jorge Lemus, who arranged the press conference at which the two ex-soldiers presented their allegations, are now believed to be in danger.

One of these prisoners, Noel Jesús de Beteta, formerly a sergeant in the Presidential High Command, was convicted in 1993 for the 1990 slaying of anthropologist Myrna Mack Chang. He is said to be in particular fear for his life after a fellow prisoner with whom he had been friendly was found hanged in his cell at the Zone 18 Preventiva Prison. Three more prisoners were subsequently found dead in the same prison. Two guards and a sub-director of the prison have been jailed in connection with their deaths.

Convictions for human rights abuses are exceedingly rare in Guatemala, and this is also the first time known to AI since 1975 that soldiers imprisoned for abuses have threatened to implicate higher authorities in such acts. On that occasion, two police agents sentenced to death for the murder of a prominent Guatemalan threatened to disclose the involvement of senior officials in "death squad" killings, but they were executed before they could do so.

AI has sent appeals to the Guatemalan authorities, urging the government to ensure that these ex-soldiers are protected and their testimonies taken in order to identify and bring to justice perpetrators of human rights violations.

Haiti

The following letter was sent to AI by a priest who witnessed the killing of Antoine Izmerly -- a supporter of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide -- on 11 September, 1993 at a mass commemorating an attack on President Aristide five years ago.

"At the Sacré Coeur church we hear threats: 'All the blood which will be shed today will be your responsibility, you communists!'...Through the door... we see a military lorry pass by ... several people barge into the church.

One is wearing a red shirt, revolver in hand. He puts his weapon in his belt and marches briskly down the central aisle, accompanied by three or four men. The assembly scatters, running in all directions to escape. We remain there, frozen...

He takes out his weapon and asks 'Who is Izméry? ...' The attaché standing to his right points at Izméry. The attaché ... then places his gun on Antoine Izméry's temple, forcing him to go out...

Through the side door, I see how the attachés [armed auxiliaries to the security forces], armed with batons, beat the people who are running away... Then we hear gun shots... the parish priest comes to announce that the body of Antoine Izméry is lying in the street. We go out.. and find the body lying a few feet from the church. Some 40 metres away, lies another man, killed in the same way by a bullet behind the ear... The bodies are still warm, lying in a large sea of blood. I remain there, with another priest, praying for the two dead men. Nobody thought that the attachés would dare to kill Antoine Izméry so openly. We thought that they had come to arrest him like so many times before.

Twelve bodies are found around the city of Port-au-Prince on that same day. The attachés are rulers of the land.

We hope that it will not take too long for the international community to help us to put an end to this widespread insecurity because every day bodies are found across the country."

AI has called for an immediate halt to human rights violations in Haiti, and that those responsible be brought to justice.

Russia: Beatings and deportations follow state of emergency

Police and army units beat scores of people detained during a two-week state of emergency in October, and deported refugees from war-torn parts of the former USSR, according to Moscow-based human rights organizations.

The state of emergency was declared following armed clashes between government and opposition forces in Moscow at the beginning of October, when over 100 people were killed. Thousands of people were detained subsequently for brief periods. Reportedly scores of them were beaten, often requiring hospitalization. AI has long been concerned about numerous similar allegations indicating that ill-treatment of detainees in police custody is systematic and widespread.

The state of emergency was also accompanied by a clamp-down on residence permits in Moscow, and almost 10,000 people without such documents were expelled from the city. Among those said to have been deported were refugees who faced serious human rights violations in their home countries. Other refugees alleged police officers extorted large sums of money from them in order not to deport them for being without residence permits, which they had been unable to obtain owing to delays in processing their applications for political asylum.

Amnesty International repeatedly expressed concern about allegations of ill-treatment, urging that all such reports be investigated swiftly and impartially, with the results made public and any perpetrators brought to justice. The organization also urged the authorities to ensure that no asylum-seekers were returned to countries where they could face human rights violations, and that they be afforded the right to have their cases considered thoroughly and swiftly in conformity with international standards on the protection of refugees.

Somalia

Most of the 70 Somalis who had been detained on political grounds by members of the multi-national UN force in Somalia since the launch of the UNOSOM II operation in May 1993, had been released by the end of November. Those detained had included political leaders of the Somali National Alliance (SNA), headed by General Mohamed Farah Aideed, who were arrested by US troops.

According to reports they were denied access to relatives, were not charged with any offence nor brought before any kind of court and were refused access to a lawyer.

A UN spokesperson said they were held in "preventative custody" for security reasons. AI commented that it set a dangerous precedent for the UN to allow its own personnel to detain people arbitrarily and indefinitely without charge or trial.

Since May 1993 several hundred Somalis, including many women and children, have been killed in the course of fighting in the capital, Mogadishu, as have over 60 UN troops and 18 US servicemen. AI has called for independent investigations into whether some of the civilians killed by UN or US troops had been victims of the use of lethal force in breach of human rights and humanitarian law obligations.

Gross and widespread human rights abuses have been committed by several of the armed Somali groups. General Aideed's force, in particular, has been responsible for major human rights abuses against members of opposing clans or sub-clans, the deliberate and arbitrary killings of Somalis suspected of informing for the UN, and the ill treatment of two military captives. Pro-Aideed mobs killed four foreign journalists in July and abused the bodies of US troops killed on 3 October.

AI has called on UNOSOM II and the armed Somali groups to put human rights for Somalia high on their agendas and, in particular, to ensure that their forces show full respect for human rights and basic humanitarian law obligations.

Spain

On the night of 29 October 1993 Julio Iglesias Zamora was released by the armed Basque group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) after 117 days in captivity. He had been taken hostage for ransom in July 1993 in San Sebastian in the Basque region of northern Spain.

Julio Iglesias, a 42-year-old electronics engineer, is the nephew of a Basque industrialist who founded an electronics company, *Ikusi*. He vanished while on his way home from work on the night of 5 July 1993; the following day police found his abandoned car.

On 3 August 1993 the Basque newspaper, *Egin*, published a statement by ETA with a photograph of Julio Iglesias holding a copy of the newspaper. In its statement ETA claimed responsibility for his "arrest".

Amnesty International had publicly urged the immediate and unconditional release of Julio Iglesias Zamora, stating its unreserved condemnation of abuses by armed political groups, such as hostage-taking and deliberate and arbitrary killings, which contravene international humanitarian standards.

Worldwide appeals

IRAQ: Marsh Arabs in peril

Thousands of men, women and children living in the marshlands of southern Iraq have had to flee from their homes as military attacks on civilians by Iraqi government forces intensify.

Hundreds have been killed in deliberate attacks on unarmed civilians over the past two years. The attacks appeared to reach new heights in 1993, increasing alarmingly after August.

The Iraqi government is seeking to increase its control of the vast marshlands located between the cities of Basra, al-'Amara and al-Nasiriyya, where the terrain has traditionally served as a hiding place for government opponents and military deserters. The government has drained large stretches of marshland, destroyed the local inhabitants' means of livelihood and deliberately targeted non-combatant civilians, triggering an exodus of over 6,000 people to southern Iran by October 1993.

In one incident in May 1992 helicopter gunships attacked a wedding ceremony in the village of al-Agir in the al-'Amara marshes, killing the bridegroom as well as children. One eyewitness, now in southern Iran, said: "the aeroplanes came and hit at us... the celebration turned into mourning". More recently, in September 1993, scores of unarmed civilians reportedly died and others were injured during a bombardment of the Abu Zargi and 'Elwi marshes northwest of Basra. Others have "disappeared" after arrest, or were tortured and later executed.

In March 1993 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights called on the UN Secretary-General to take the necessary measures for setting up a human rights monitoring operation within Iraq. AI remains deeply concerned that no concrete steps have been taken in this regard. In November 1993 it called on the UN General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to "make available without further delay the necessary human and financial resources" for such an operation.

Due to UN sanctions against Iraq, please send appeals to Iraq's diplomatic representative in your country, asking the Iraqi Government to cease immediately the arbitrary arrest, torture and extrajudicial execution of civilians of the southern marshes.

Myanmar

Ma Thida, a 27-year-old medical doctor and well-known short story writer, was arrested on 7 August 1993 and is currently serving a 20-year sentence imposed on her on 15 October. Ma Thida is prominent among the country's political opposition and had earlier been the campaign assistant to prisoner of conscience Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and one of the founders of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Myanmar's main opposition party.

Ma Thida was arrested with ten others and held incommunicado before being brought to trial on 27 September on charges of "endangering public tranquility", having contact with unlawful associations and distributing unlawful literature. All 11 were tried under legislation which the authorities have used to suppress peaceful political opposition activity since the military regained control of the country in a *coup d'état* following months of nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988. The other ten were given 20 year sentences.

Amnesty International believes that Ma Thida was arrested and imprisoned solely for her non-violent activities within the

NLD, a party which was established during the 1988 pro-democracy movement and which enjoys wide public support.

Please send appeals in English if possible, urging the immediate and unconditional release of Ma Thida, to: Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman, State Law and Order Restoration Council, c/o Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.

Togo

Attigbé Stéphane Koudossou and Gérard Akoumey were sentenced to three years' imprisonment on 10 September on the basis of "confessions" extracted as a result of torture.

They were arrested on 26 July 1993 and taken to the headquarters of the *Gendarmerie nationale*, a paramilitary police force, where they were tortured. They later appeared on national television, where they made statements incriminating themselves in recent bomb attacks in the capital, Lomé.

They were tried in August on charges of "criminal association, destruction of public property and destruction of buildings".

On the basis of their confessions, the prosecution alleged that Attigbé Stéphane Koudossou and Gérard Akoumey, who were said to be members of an opposition party, the Democratic Convention of African People (CPDA), had been commissioned to bomb the headquarters of another opposition party, the Action Committee for Renewal, on 24 July.

Defence lawyers protested that the two defendants had been tortured during pre-trial interrogation and forced to make confessions dictated to them by the security forces. They urged the court to order medical examinations of the defendants but it refused, and accepted the confessions as evidence despite the allegations that they were made under duress, in breach of international fair trial standards. As a result the defence lawyers refused to participate further in the trial. AI is calling for an urgent, impartial investigation into the alleged torture of the two prisoners and for the two to receive a fair re-trial.

Please send appeals calling for a review of the convictions and for an independent inquiry into the reports that they were tortured, and seeking assurances that Togo's courts will not defy the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Togo has signed, by admitting statements made under torture as evidence, to: Son Excellence Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma, Président de la République, Palais présidentiel, Avenue de la Marina, Lomé, Togo.

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Focus

[ARTICLE ONE: STREET CHILDREN]

This is the notorious notice that went up around Bogotá city centre in Colombia last summer. It "invites" street children and other "criminals" to their own funerals. It is professionally printed

and was reportedly drawn up by local industrialists, shopkeepers and business groups. Dozens of these two-foot square notices were put up overnight. And while these child prostitutes, clutching bags of glue, appear oblivious to the warning, others know that these are not empty death threats: Colombia has one of the highest murder rates in the world. Two thousand eight hundred children were murdered in Colombia in 1991 alone.

Street children who often turn to petty crime to survive are viewed as "social undesirables". Local businessmen and shopkeepers who see the children as keeping potential business away often support "death squads" in "social clean-up operations". There is evidence that these "death squads" are made up of members of the National Police.

Even those who try to improve life for some of the children on the streets have come under attack. The Street Gang Project in Cali, Valle del Cauca, was set up under the auspices of the Cali city council and the Council for Peace, Security and Development. It was an attempt to rehabilitate members of street-gangs who handed in their weapons. It attracted over 200 children. Then, over a three month period between May and September 1993, 12 of the young people involved in the project were shot and killed. The Cali Peace Adviser believed the police were responsible. He subsequently received death threats. The project's future is now in doubt and there are fears for the safety of the project staff and the 200 children taking part.

Similar patterns of harassment, threats, beatings, torture and killings at the hands of the authorities continue to be reported from other countries such as Brazil and Guatemala where children have been forced onto the streets through social conditions.

In Brazil, hundreds of young people continue to be gunned down in the streets. In Rio de Janeiro State over 300 children and adolescents were killed in the first six months of 1993 alone. In one incident in July 1993, gunmen - allegedly police officers - opened fire at dawn on a group of 50 children sleeping rough near Candelária Church in the centre of Rio de Janeiro. Five died on the spot; another two were killed nearby and an eighth victim died of his wounds four days later. Unusually, four people - including three policemen - have been indicted for the crime. However, in most cases, the Brazilian authorities have failed to complete any investigations or to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In Guatemala, as in Colombia and Brazil, it is often not only the children themselves who are at risk, but those who try to help them. The security forces have used threats and violence in attempts to intimidate some of those involved, including staff at Casa Alianza (Covenant House) who continue to press for the perpetrators of human rights violations against children to be brought to justice.

AI continues to campaign for thorough investigations into all killings of street children and for those responsible to be brought to justice. The organization has also urged the authorities to ensure that street children and other victims of police violence, as well as witnesses, are offered adequate state protection.

[ARTICLE TWO: SRI LANKA]

Children often suffer when human rights abuses are inflicted on their parents or other relatives. But in an incident in Sri Lanka, nearly 70 children, many of them very young, were themselves among the "disappeared".

On 9 September 1990 armed soldiers appeared in four villages in the district of Batticaloa in Sri Lanka. They ordered all the residents to leave their homes and assemble on the road, threatening them with death unless they obeyed. The villagers were marched towards an army camp. Screams were later heard coming from the camp. Sixty-eight children -- including a baby girl of 11 months and others as young as one and two years -- and about 100 adults, many of them over 60-years-old, have never been seen again. Amnesty International has the names of all the children reportedly taken by the army.

These events took place in the villages of Saturukondan, Pannichaiyadi, Pillayaradi and Kokkuvil.

Since 1983, when conflict heightened between government forces and Tamil separatists, tens of thousands of people have "disappeared" in custody in Sri Lanka.

The Tamil armed separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have themselves been responsible for gross abuses of human rights, including the deliberate and arbitrary killing of hundreds of civilians -- including children, the torture and killing of prisoners, and abduction for ransom.

How you can help:

Write about the "disappearances" in September 1990 of 68 children from the Batticaloa District, urging full impartial investigations and those responsible be brought to justice, to: President D.B. Wijetunga, Presidential Secretariat, Republic Square, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

[ARTICLE THREE: DOUBLE PAGE]

On 12 September 1993, in the early hours of the morning, two children were sleeping soundly at the home of their aunt and grandmother. Six-year-old Abelardo Junior and his 10-year-old sister, Manilyn, lived in Bitan-agen in Butuan City in the Philippines. At half-past two in the morning there was a commotion outside the house. Loud voices demanded that they open the door. The grandmother, terrified, refused. More than a dozen armed men burst into her home. They grabbed the two children and their 20-year-old aunt. The grandmother, by now utterly distraught, pleaded with the men to leave her daughter and grandchildren alone. One of the men said something about acting under orders. The three young people were bundled into a car which sped off into the night. They had "disappeared".

Relatives believe the children were abducted by armed men acting on behalf of the military to force their parents - allegedly members of an armed opposition group - to give themselves up to the authorities.

These children were among the "lucky" ones: after being held for three weeks in separate detention centres, they and their aunt were released. The vast majority of those who "disappear" - in whichever region of the world - are rarely found alive.

In countries across the world children are still being tortured, "disappeared", killed or unjustly imprisoned by state security forces, sometimes to force their parents to surrender or to confess.

Other children are singled out for human rights abuses because they are seen by those in authority as social or political threats. During the counter-insurgency offensive against anti-government rebels in Guatemala in 1982, a member of the security forces told a foreign journalist: "You have to kill the children of 10, eight, five years. You have to finish them off because they've already heard the things their fathers say, and the children will do it." When government forces are fighting armed opposition groups, children in the areas of conflict often get caught in the cross-fire, or can suffer "disappearance", abduction, targeted killing or collective reprisal. We have seen this happening in every region of the world, from Angola to Bosnia, Peru to Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka to Israel and the Occupied Territories. Children are often victimized simply because they live in an area, or belong to an ethnic group believed to be sympathetic to one side in a conflict. The appalling aftermath of the coup attempt in Burundi in October 1993 is only the most recent example of children caught up in ethnic bloodletting. Children were among thousands of civilians massacred or injured by civilian gangs and soldiers.

In some countries, extreme poverty forces children onto the streets to fend for themselves or their families. Street children are automatically regarded as criminal suspects by many law enforcement officers, and are often subjected to harassment, threats or violent attacks. In Bogotá last year death notices appeared in the city inviting street children to their own funerals. These "invitations" were said to come from the local business community and threatened "extermination" of "criminals". The killers of street children in countries such as Colombia and Brazil have often been identified as members of the security forces.

We know that the long-term effect of human rights violations on children can be devastating. Children who are tortured or ill-treated in prison, or forced to watch their parents or other family members suffer brutal or humiliating treatment, undergo a trauma which can cause persistent and debilitating psychological problems.

A very few countries continue to impose the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment on children. Over the last 10 years, seven countries worldwide are known to have put people to death after courts sentenced them for crimes committed when they were still juveniles: the largest confirmed number of such executions have been carried out in the USA. Three juvenile offenders (two black and one of Latin American origin) were executed in the USA in 1993, in violation of international standards which prohibit the execution of people aged under 18 at the time of the crime. Speaking in November, at a national conference on children organized by AI's British Section, Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sané said that the organization will continue to draw attention to the particular needs of children who are subject to torture, execution or other human rights violations.

"So far this year alone, " said Pierre Sané, "AI has issued fifty or more urgent appeals where children or juveniles have been at risk."

Children feature strongly in AI's current major international campaign on political killings and "disappearances". Among cases highlighted in the campaign are those of a 15-year-old Iraqi boy, one of the hundreds of Kurdish children who have "disappeared", been imprisoned without trial, held as hostages, tortured or executed - sometimes after being dragged from school. Another case is that of a teenage girl in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who was detained with two others, including her sister, taken by Serbian paramilitaries and held at a former hotel, where they were raped. Her sister and the other girl were released. Mirsada has not been seen again. Other cases in the campaign allow us to focus in the campaign material on the broader threat to children in particular countries, such as street children in Brazil, and the large number of children who have been victims of shootings by the Israeli security forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Yet other cases, - such as the shocking numbers of "disappearances" which have occurred in past years in countries such as Sri Lanka and Guatemala - while focusing on the plight of the parent who was killed or "disappeared", also remind us about the children left behind who suffer also. In Guatemala, some of these children are forced onto the streets in order to survive.

In his speech to the conference, Mr Sané took a closer look at four of these cases. "I think they help make clear the thinking behind Amnesty International's work in this area," he said.

"On 8 December, 1991, fifteen-year-old Raúl Vázquez Hernández was taken to a police station in Villahermosa in the Mexican state of Tabasco. There, he was beaten and kicked, and strangled until he lost consciousness. His "crime"? He had been walking near an anti-government demonstration, in which he says he did not even participate. The police claimed he had attacked a police officer: a claim which was never substantiated and the case was never brought before a court. In addition to his physical suffering the whole episode has deeply affected Raúl's emotional well-being.

"Tenzin Dekyong left her Tibetan home and family in the country to join the Buddhist nunnery of Michungri. At only 16 she was still a novice. On 13 March, 1993, while she was demonstrating in Lhasa against Chinese rule, police arrested her and two other young nuns. Tenzin was reportedly beaten after her arrest. The nuns were taken to the Gutsa Detention Centre in Lhasa, from where there have been reports of torture. Tenzin's detention in the same prison as adults violates international standards and does not accord with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which China is a signatory. She is regarded by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

"Ten-year-old Bilal Ahmed happened to be at home in Srinagar in Kashmir on Sunday, 1 August, 1993 when soldiers from the Border Security Force burst into the house. They had been searching for militants, but they shot and killed Bilal. As his horrified parents ran into the room, they too were shot dead. Over the next two days, there were angry demonstrations in the streets against the killing of this family. Another three people were shot dead by the security forces.

"In July 1993 Frederick Lashley was executed in Missouri - the first juvenile to be executed in the state for 63 years. Frederick was black, 17 at the time of the crime, and homeless. He was abandoned by his mother and frequently beaten by his father. He was convicted of murdering his cousin, who was also his foster mother, by an all-white jury. In a letter to Amnesty International after Frederick's death, a staff attorney at the Missouri Capital Punishment Resource Center wrote: 'The letter-writing campaign on the part of Amnesty International was quite overwhelming. The Governor's office reported hundreds of letters coming in daily in support of granting clemency for Frederick. I am sorry to say that I believe that the Governor was swayed more by the fear of adverse media attention and his own political aspirations, rather than listening to the outpouring of heartfelt sentiments of people all over the world...'

"Here we have cases of torture, a prisoner of conscience, extrajudicial executions and the death penalty. These are the particular types of human rights violations that AI's mandate requires the movement to deal with."

AI continues to feature children strongly in its reports on human rights violations and in its campaigning against such violations. You can help by following the "Lives Behind the Lies" international campaign against "disappearances" and political killings and sending appeals where appropriate.

You can also take action on some of the cases featured here:

Philippines: send appeals welcoming the release of the two children and their aunt who were taken from their home in Bitan-agan, Batuan City and urging a full inquiry into their abduction and "disappearance" to: President Fidel V. Ramos, Malacañang Palace, Manila, Philippines.

India: send appeals expressing concern at continuing reports of extrajudicial killing in Kashmir by the security forces, including the recent examples of 10-year-old Bilal Ahmed and his parents, and urging a full inquiry, to: Mr V. Krishna Rao, Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Office of the Governor, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

China: send appeals urging the authorities to release Tenzin Dekyong and others being held solely for the peaceful exercise of their fundamental human rights, to: Tibet Autonomous Region President, Gyancaïn Norbu Zhuxi, Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu, Lasashi, Xizang Zangzu Zizhiqu, People's Republic of China.

[ARTICLE FOUR: THOMAS HAMMARBERG]

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: A NEW APPROACH

In 1993 Amnesty International recorded human rights violations against children in every region of the world. "Disappearances", torture or extrajudicial executions of children were reported in 35 countries. These figures are compiled only from those cases made known to AI. The true figure is almost certainly much higher. In a major international effort to prevent such abuses and protect the rights of children, in 1989 the United Nations drew up the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Thomas Hammarberg is a former

Secretary-General of Amnesty International and, until recently, was Secretary-General of Radda Barnen - Sweden's Save the Children organization. He has been a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child since 1991 and is now Vice-Chair of that committee. In this article, he examines the thinking behind the Convention and assesses its impact.

No human rights treaty has had such a positive response as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 1989 and declared open for ratification by States in early 1990. Today, no fewer than 149 countries are parties to the Convention and some 20 others have signed and thereby indicated their intention to ratify. Universal ratification is within reach.

No distinction -- or grading -- is made in the Convention between economic, social and cultural rights on one side and civil and political rights on the other.

The convention came into force less than a year after it was adopted by the General Assembly. The ten-person Committee to monitor its implementation was elected and has just finished its fourth session. It has already begun to receive and scrutinize State party reports.

Only when reality is changed, will the Convention have an impact. We are far from that day.

Children still suffer immensely as casualties of war and violence; as victims of racial discrimination and xenophobia; as refugees and displaced children; as disabled; as victims of neglect, cruelty and exploitation - sometimes even in the hands of their own guardians.

Millions of children suffer from scourges of poverty and economic crisis, from hunger and homelessness, from epidemics and illiteracy, from degradation of the environment.

These facts were mentioned when the State leaders met at the UN World Summit on Children three years ago. They have not changed for the better.

Still, the Convention is an inspiration and a hope. The next-to-universal ratification is an important first step. The close cooperation between the monitoring Committee, UNICEF and other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations makes it more difficult for governments to forget their pledges. A global movement is being built.

In a number of countries reforms are also being introduced. Laws are changed to provide for the protection and even participation of children. Institutions are created for ombudswork for children. Questions are asked in national parliaments about the wisdom of budget cuts affecting children.

One day these moves will begin to change reality.

The convention is not simply legal in character. It does formulate a visionary perspective. The line between visions and clichés is usually thin, but the principles expressed in the Convention do make sense. They define what the rights of the child are about:

- The principle that each child has rights, without discrimination.

- The principle of the best interest of the child: in all actions concerning children their best interests should be a primary consideration.
 - The right of the child to be respected: to express freely his or hers views - and have these views be given due weight.
 - The duty of the state to ensure the development of the child.
- These four basic ideas form the philosophy of the Convention. All other rights derive from them. Together they form a new attitude to children.

After the first discussion on a country by the Monitoring Committee, there will, as a rule, be a time gap of five years before the next report is due from the state concerned. This emphasizes the importance of continuous local monitoring.

That aspect is reflected in the Convention itself and has been stressed by the Committee. The government is obliged under the treaty to spread information about the Convention and also to make its own report widely available.

The Committee is convinced that a public discussion about the rights of the child should be encouraged in all countries - and it asks questions to that effect. In the meantime, much of the actual monitoring should be done locally.

And perhaps most important, the Committee seeks constructive cooperation with non-governmental groups, both national and international.