

News and Appeals

Worldwide Appeals:

China

Zhang Xianliang, 48, a veteran pro-democracy campaigner in Shanghai previously jailed for five years, was arrested again in early June 1993, and sentenced to three years of "re-education through labour" -- a form of administrative detention imposed without charge or trial. He was accused of "inciting trouble" for raising the case of dissidents detained in Shanghai. AI considers that he is being arbitrarily detained for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Zhang Xianliang had taken part in the 1978-79 Democracy Wall movement in Shanghai and was a founder of the unofficial journal Science and Democracy. In 1982, he was arrested and later sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "counter-revolutionary" activities. After his release in 1987, he and his family suffered harassment and discrimination. He had been unemployed as a result over the past three years.

On 3 June 1993 he was detained for 24 hours by the Shanghai police, apparently to prevent him hosting with some friends a commemoration of the 4 June 1989 Beijing massacre on its fourth anniversary. He was detained again on 5 June 1993.

In August, he was sentenced by the Shanghai Municipal Labour Re-education Management Committee. His wife was allowed to visit him for the first time in late October.

During August, Zhang Xianliang was transferred to the Qingdong labour-re-education farm, a labour camp in Qingpu county, Jiangsu province. On several occasions he has been placed under "strict regime" at the farm. He suffers from kidney trouble and heart disease and it is feared that his health may further deteriorate in detention.

Please send appeals urging Zhang Xianliang's release to the mayor of Shanghai, Huang Ju Shizhang, Shanghaishi Renmin Zhengfu, 30 Fuzhoulu, Shanghaishi 200002, People's Republic of China.

Turkey

Abdülvahap Timurta_ -- whose brother died in police custody in 1991 -- "disappeared" after being detained by gendarmerie carrying out a security raid on the village of Yeniköy in the province of __rnak, southeast Turkey on 14 August 1993.

According to some sources, he was held at __rnak Gendarmerie Brigade Headquarters for at least 20 days. The local prosecutor has denied that he was in custody.

The family have received no further information concerning his whereabouts. Abdülvahap Timurta_'s brother Mehmet Tevfik Timurta_ died in 1991, apparently as a result of torture, after interrogation in Cizre Police Headquarters, and __rnak Gendarmerie Brigade Headquarters.

In response to a parliamentary question on Abdülvahap Timurta_'s "disappearance", the Interior Minister Nahit Mente_e replied flatly that there was no record of his detention.

At least 24 "disappearances" were reported in Turkey in 1993.

Please write polite letters in English, expressing concern about the fate of Abdülvahap Timurta_, and calling for an independent and impartial inquiry into his "disappearance", to President Süleyman Demirel, Cumhuriyet_kanl___, 06100 Ankara, Turkey.

Ramdhana Debbiche, a 22-year-old student, was arrested in November 1992 from the University in Tunis and was reportedly beaten and ill-treated in Ariana police station. After her arrest she learned that she had previously been tried *in absentia*, without ever receiving a summons to appear in court, and sentenced to three years and two months' imprisonment.

She was convicted of belonging to an unauthorized organization, holding unauthorized meetings and distributing leaflets. She was not accused of having used or advocated violence, and the prosecution produced no evidence to substantiate the charges. She was convicted according to laws which have been used to imprison thousands of people over the last three years.

After her arrest, she was retried and her sentence was initially reduced to six months. But this was increased to 18 months as a result of an appeal by the prosecution. She then lost her own appeal against the increased sentence.

Later, she was informed by the prison authorities that she would have to serve a three-year prison term because the two appeal verdicts are treated as separate sentences.

The illegal practice of conducting trials without summoning the defendants to court and sentencing people twice for the same offence are recurrent in Tunisia.

Ramdhana Debbiche is held in Manouba prison in Tunis. AI considers her a prisoner of conscience.

Please send appeals calling for Ramdhana Debbiche to be immediately and unconditionally released, to the Minister of Justice: M. Sadok Chaâbane, Ministre de la Justice, Ministère del la Justice, Boulevard Bab Benat, Tunis, Tunisia.

News articles

Afghanistan

Hundreds of civilians, including women and children, have been killed during renewed intense fighting in the capital Kabul and the northern city Mazar-e-Sharif since the beginning of the year.

Hospitals, mosques and residential areas in Kabul have been bombarded leaving over 10,000 people injured. Thousands of Afghans are seeking refuge in Pakistan and many more thousands are internally displaced.

Reports indicate that defenceless civilians continue to be targeted by both sides to the conflict -- government troops loyal to President Rabbani and troops of the new alliance of Islamist leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Uzbek leader Dostum. AI has urgently called on all parties to the conflict to respect human rights and observe international humanitarian standards.

Djibouti

Ali Aref, a prisoner of conscience and former head of government, for whom AI made worldwide appeals a year ago, was released on 15 December 1993. He and 14 other members of Djibouti's Afar ethnic group, arrested in 1991, were serving prison terms after a grossly unfair trial on fabricated charges of plotting to overthrow President Hassan Gouled's government. All were freed under a presidential pardon. On his release, Ali Aref said they should never have been in prison in the first place, and criticized the "pardon". He thanked AI for its campaign.

China

Hundreds -- and possibly thousands -- of people were executed in China in 1993, when AI recorded yet another substantial rise in the number of death sentences.

Official figures for death sentences and executions are regarded by the Chinese authorities as a "state secret", making it impossible to know the true numbers. But from January to November 1993, AI recorded 1249 executions -- more than during the whole of 1992. The actual number is certainly much higher.

The number of death sentences and executions appears to rise during anti-crime campaigns and on key dates -- such as 26 June, International Day against Drug Abuse and Trafficking, and in January as the Chinese New Year festival approaches -- as a warning to potential offenders.

This pattern was repeated in the run-up to 1 October, China's National Day. There was a dramatic increase in the number of death sentences passed in September: at least 570 people were sentenced to death: most were executed.

In many cases those sentenced to death have been convicted of violent crimes, but some are also executed for non-violent offences such as embezzlement or theft, which in other countries are punishable only by fines or imprisonment. In October, for example, in Heilongjiang Province, Yue Baozhang was sentenced to death for stealing 14 cows.

China stands out for the extent to which it uses capital punishment. According to AI's records, in 1992 China accounted for 63 per cent of the world's executions. There is no evidence in China or anywhere else to show that executions act as a deterrent to crime. AI opposes the death penalty in all cases on the grounds that it is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Morocco

The appointment in November 1993 of Morocco's first ever Minister for Human Rights, Omar Azziman, led to hopes that the Moroccan authorities were newly determined to make substantial and enduring improvements to Morocco's poor human rights record.

A clear signal of this would have been the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience. This has not happened.

When AI delegates visited Morocco in November/December 1993, they were pleased to record some improvements in the human rights situation: particularly in the conditions of pre-trial detention of political detainees.

However, little progress has been made to resolve longstanding concerns, including the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience and of political prisoners after unfair trials, the failure to account for hundreds of Moroccan and Sahrawi "disappeared", and the continued use of prolonged incommunicado detention and torture against Sahrawis in Western Sahara.

Detainees are still beaten in police stations and some prisons are grossly overcrowding.

AI's delegates held talks with the new Human Rights Minister, and handed him lists of the "disappeared" and some 500 political prisoners.

Over 130 of the names on these lists were those of prisoners of conscience who are still losing years of their lives in cells when they should never have been imprisoned at all.

AI urged the Moroccan government to release them and end Morocco's history of imprisoning people for their peacefully-held beliefs.

Mexico

AI is investigating recent reports of gross human rights violations by the Mexican security forces following an uprising on 1 January in the southern state of Chiapas by the armed opposition group, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (ZNLA).

Within the first two weeks of the fighting, AI had received reports of arbitrary arrests, torture of detainees, at least five cases of summary executions of prisoners and at least three "disappearances". Mexican armed forces also bombed the civilian population in several villages in the state of Chiapas. AI sent a two-person delegation to the area to investigate in mid-January.

While welcoming the ceasefire announced by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari on January 12, the organization called on the Mexican Government to ensure effective prevention of further violations in Chiapas and elsewhere, and to hold a full investigation into all the human rights violations reported in Chiapas.

AI has for many years documented a pattern of gross human rights violations against members of the indigenous and peasant communities in the context of conflicts over land-tenure and allegations of electoral fraud in Chiapas and other regions in Mexico. Many of the victims belong to the poorest sectors of the population. Violations have included massive and arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment of community members and sporadic cases of political killings. AI also condemned the taking of hostages by the Zapatista National Liberation Army. Most of those held by that group had been released by 14 January. While welcoming their release, the organization was concerned that Absalón Castellanos, a former governor of Chiapas, was still being held, and called for his immediate and unconditional release.

United Nations

UN TO ESTABLISH HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The United Nations (UN) has taken a major step forward for human rights with the December 1993 decision of the General Assembly to establish a High Commissioner for Human Rights with principal responsibility for all the UN's human rights activities. The creation of this post was Amnesty International's top priority at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna last year.

The Commissioner is to play an active global role to: secure the full realization of all rights; prevent violations; coordinate human rights activities throughout the UN system; strengthen UN mechanisms for human rights protection and promotion; and coordinate education, information and advisory services programs.

Much depends on the person appointed. A Commissioner who was bold and creative could really advance human rights protection if s/he is willing to take up this challenge and is given the political support -- and the necessary resources -- to do so.

Equatorial Guinea

Hopes that the government of Equatorial Guinea would fulfil its promises to protect civil and political rights in 1993 -- the year of the country's first multi-party elections -- were dashed in the latter half of the year. During the run-up to elections in November, repression increased markedly. At least 130 people were arrested; most were severely tortured before being released.

As it became clear that no reforms would be carried out opposition parties said they would boycott the elections. Among those detained for suspected opposition were dozens of soldiers. All were reportedly tortured and one, Pedro Motú Mamiaga, died as a result.

Security personnel extrajudicially executed two people during a wave of arrests on Annobón, a tiny Atlantic island 670 kilometres from the mainland.

Scores of people were arrested after the elections -- won by the ruling party when most of the electorate abstained from voting. Many of those arrested were opposition party supporters. Most were released within a few days or weeks.

Over 20 students were detained for several days and tortured after collecting university text books from the Spanish consulate in the mainland city of Bata. The authorities subsequently claimed that the Spanish consul had been holding a meeting with opposition parties and expelled him. Spain had refused to send election observers.

Lebanon

AI has expressed concern to the Lebanese authorities about the arrest and detention of Samir Philip Nasr, a supporter of the Guardians of the Cedar, a political party in Lebanon. It believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience.

Samir Nasr was arrested on 3 November 1993 and held in the Ministry of Defence in Yarzeh, Beirut. He was later charged with having carried a letter from the party's leader, Etienne Saqr, to General Michel 'Aoun, the former Lebanese leader ousted in October 1990, currently in exile in France. The letter allegedly suggested that General 'Aoun should establish contacts in Israel, as well as Jewish groups in the USA.

The charges were based on a statement which Samir Nasr later retracted, saying that it had been obtained from him as a result of ill-treatment. AI has called for his allegation to be investigated. His trial, which began on 17 December 1993, is due to resume on 11 March 1994. He was refused release on bail in December.

Senegal

At least 24 people from Senegal's southern region of Casamance who were arrested between September 1992 and early 1993 are feared to have "disappeared".

They were suspected by the government of involvement in armed opposition organized by Casamance separatists, but were not among the 256 Casamançais prisoners released following a ceasefire agreement in July 1993.

Some of those released had been tortured and held without trial for nearly one year, accused of crimes against the security of the state. Their detention was shrouded in secrecy, with judicial officials refusing to give AI representatives and others access to the prisoners or information about them. In some cases relatives were unaware of the prisoners' whereabouts and it appears that only two of the 256 were represented by lawyers.

AI fears the 24 may have been killed in custody. It has urged the authorities to account for them, and to end the practice of secret detention. It has also repeated a previous appeal to the Senegalese government for prompt investigations by an independent and impartial authority into all allegations of torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions.

Central and Eastern Europe

The 1993-94 Campaign Against "Disappearances" and Political Killings has been making a remarkable impact on a number of Central and Eastern European countries.

Highly successful launches of the campaign in Poland and Slovenia in recent months have given an enormous boost to the efforts of the developing AI structures there to raise the profile of the organization. In both those countries, press conferences on the aims and featured cases of the campaign attracted the attention of leading journalists and resulted in front-page coverage in the major national newspapers, as well as extensive national radio and television coverage.

Public events in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Bulgaria drew attention to AI's work against "disappearances" and political killings, and brought similar recognition of AI's presence in these countries. Imaginative campaigning and publicity have been the hallmark of activities throughout the region. In Slovenia, obituary notices about several of the featured victims were printed in major newspapers; in Hungary, a bus travelled around Budapest visiting the embassies of countries featured in the campaign and presenting petitions on individual cases.

Additional public events are planned in the coming months for Slovakia, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. The campaign has also been important to the re-launch of AI in Croatia, where a press conference and public meeting were held in Zagreb in January. Group activity begun at the end of the 1980s in Croatia had largely been suspended after the outbreak of the conflict there in 1991.

VENEZUELA

Only a few months after AI reported appalling prison conditions in Venezuela, over 150 people have been killed in prison riots there.

During a protest on 3 January by inmates of Maracaibo National Prison (also known as Sabaneta) prison cells were set alight and dozens of people died from burns and asphyxiation.

Security forces clashed with prisoners as they entered the prison to try to regain control. Scores of prisoners died from gunshot wounds and stabbings. The authorities blamed the deaths on in-fighting amongst prisoners, but local human rights monitors fear that many of the killings were extrajudicial executions by the security forces.

AI said it was appalled that while hundreds of relatives were waiting for information about the situation inside the prison, the authorities had begun burying dozens of bodies in common graves, alleging lack of refrigerated storage facilities.

In a separate incident, on 5 January, at least nine inmates were killed and dozens of others wounded when security forces tried to control a riot at the Aragua State Penitentiary, known as Tocarón prison.

An AI delegation visited Venezuela in October/November 1993. Although it was granted admission to several penal institutions, it was denied access to Sabaneta prison.

Unless effective measures are taken swiftly, AI fears that incidents like these could be repeated in other prisons throughout the country.

Amnesty International Newsletter - March 1994

Focus

MARCH 1994 FOCUS ON WOMEN

[NOTE: items in square brackets still being checked; please check with final proofs]

WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

The human rights perspective

"... families are the fullest reflection, at the grass roots level, of the strengths and weaknesses of the social and developmental welfare environment, and as such offer a uniquely comprehensive and synthesizing approach to social issues." [ECOSOC draft resolution to GA, 27 July 1993 (status now?)]

Djamilah Abubakar was found dead by the side of a road two days after Indonesian soldiers arrested her in March 1991. For Djamilah this was the end of nearly two years in which the army had persecuted her solely because of who she was married to. Her husband, Mohammad Jasin bin Pawang Piah, was a suspected member of *Aceh Merdeka*, the armed opposition group opposing Indonesia rule in Aceh. Djamilah's encounters with the military began in mid-June 1989, when dozens of soldiers arrived at her home searching for her husband, a fisherman. When she told them he was at sea and would be gone for days, they accused her of lying. They forced her, at gunpoint, to admit that Jasin was an *Aceh Merdeka* member, and then they forced her to undress. They eventually left, after burning the house to the ground, and Djamilah fled to stay with relatives in another village. Six months later, soldiers came to that village, warned villagers not to give shelter to people involved with *Aceh Merdeka* and named Djamilah as one of them. She fled again to another village where she stayed for a year. Shortly after her husband had visited her there, she was detained and killed.

This year, 1994, is the UN International Year of the Family. To mark this, 15 May has been declared as the annual International Day of Families. There is a huge body of evidence that family relationships are used to violate women's human rights across the world. Women are frequently seen as a "soft target"; they are singled out for imprisonment, torture or death because they are related to men suspected of opposition to the government.

In Burundi, 27-year-old Maria Mawazo was killed because her husband was suspected of sympathizing with insurgents. On 27 November 1991 soldiers raided her house in Muzinda, a small town 15 kilometres north of the capital, Bujumbura. They had come to arrest her husband, Isidore Ciza, whom they suspected of supporting an insurgent group known as the Hutu People's Liberation Party¹, which had launched attacks on government forces three days earlier. The soldiers also claimed they were searching for weapons. The soldiers did not find Isidore Ciza. Nor did they find any weapons. They found instead a household of terrified women and children, on whom they took a swift and brutal revenge. After forcing the women and children into the house at gunpoint, the soldiers threw a grenade into it.

All but one were killed. After the explosion, some of the soldiers went into the house and shot the children at point blank range. The only survivor was Beatrice Tabu, Isidore Ciza's second wife. She escaped by hiding under a bed. International protests followed the killings. The government claimed that the slaughtered women and children were "victims of cross-fire".

Women and their children were among tens of thousands killed by soldiers and civilian mobs in the wake of the attempted coup in Burundi in October 1993. Some of the women were killed or severely injured while holding their babies, many of whom were also killed.

In several countries women have been arbitrarily detained to punish their male relatives for opposition activities. Some have effectively been held as hostages in an attempt to make their male relatives surrender to government forces.

In Tunisia the authorities have arbitrarily detained women on a mass scale. Many of the hundreds of women detained in the past two years were tortured, including by being threatened with rape, or ill-treated. The vast majority were taken into custody because they were the wives and relatives of men linked to the illegal Islamic organization, Al-Nahda, or the Tunisian Workers' Communist Party, although some were themselves suspected of being members of or supporting these organizations. Most of the women detained were only interrogated about the whereabouts and activities of their male relatives, and were never charged or brought to trial.

The mass detentions started in 1991, when the security forces began to crack down on members, supporters and suspected sympathisers of Al-Nahda. Men who were active or suspected of support for Al-Nahda, went into hiding or fled the country. As a result, the security forces focused on their [female] relatives. The women were taken into custody to force them to information concerning the men's whereabouts and activities and to put pressure on them to give themselves up.

In Nigeria, six women were arbitrarily detained for almost two years because they were related to people sought by the authorities. In April 1990 there was a failed coup attempt in Nigeria. In its wake, hundreds of soldiers and civilians were detained without charge or trial. Although most were later released, nine civilians were held without charge or trial for almost two years after the abortive coup. They included six women apparently detained because of their relationship to men believed involved in the coup attempt. They were effectively hostages until their release in March 1992.

A 50-year-old woman and her family were ill-treated and tortured for days by Indonesian soldiers in East Timor, because they were looking for her son. They suspected him of involvement in a pro-independence organization. The woman was arrested in September 1992 and interrogated under torture about her son's whereabouts. When she denied knowing where he was, she was stripped naked, beaten, kicked and given electric shocks. Then, her unmarried sister-in-law and one of her nephews, a teenager, were called in for questioning. They were tortured as well, with beatings and electric shocks. The teenager was stripped naked and burning cigarettes were stubbed out on his genitals. The woman was repeatedly sexually abused. All three were released after several days, on condition they return with the information the military wanted. When they failed to do so they were again detained, beaten and [the women] raped. Many women suffer casual violence during military raids to detain their male relatives. Olivia Pérez, 15 years old, seven months pregnant, and living with her partner in Peru's San Martín department, was beaten by soldiers who came to arrest him in April 1992. A few hours later she began to haemorrhage and was taken to hospital. She lost her baby. Her father made a formal complaint to the head of the Political Military Command which governs that region, stating that Olivia Pérez had lost her baby "as a result of the beating and the emotional impact of seeing her partner taken away".

WOMEN AND WAR

[photograph of Clare Stewart]

Clare Stewart, a member of the African National Congress (ANC) aged 34, "disappeared" on 10 November 1993 after being abducted on her way to work in the northern Natal region of South Africa, near to the Mozambique border. Her body was found two weeks later. Clare, who had two young children, was an agricultural development worker and involved in a cooperative project in Mangusi. Northern Natal, where she lived and worked is a tense area, politically dominated by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). It falls under the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu "homeland" government. There are well documented reports of both the KwaZulu and the South African police colluding in attacks on ANC supporters in the area. In 1993 journalists located a paramilitary training camp for IFP members set up by the KwaZulu government and security force members. Northern Natal is a security-sensitive zone also because of its proximity to the border with Mozambique, and the scale of weapons smuggling into South Africa across that border. The day before Clare was abducted men apparently speaking a Mozambican dialect were seen near her home, making explicit inquiries about her. There are fears that Clare Stewart may have stumbled across some security sensitive information in the area which made her a target.

The 1990s have seen conflicts erupt and intensify across the world. The scale of the carnage is terrifying; millions of people have been affected. The dramatic political changes which heralded this decade and brought with them new hopes for human rights have resulted in human rights catastrophes in all regions of the world. When conflict prevails, the authorities make no exceptions on grounds of gender. Women activists run the same risk as their male counterparts, they pay the same price for opposition –they are as likely as men to be singled out and tortured, abducted, or killed by government agents.

Blanca Valero de Durán was killed by gunmen in January 1992, outside her office in Barrancabermeja, a city in [northwest] Colombia. She was the Secretary of CREDHOS, an independent human rights organization. Three police officers witnessed the attack but ignored her cries for help and made no attempt to pursue her killers. Shortly after she was killed, local military commanders accused CREDHOS of links with guerrilla organizations. Paramilitaries began harassing the committee's members. In the following months another two CREDHOS workers were killed. Several others fled Barrancabermeja in fear of their lives.

The government condemned the attacks and promised full investigations, but those responsible were never identified. In January 1994 two naval officers told the Attorney General that the killing of the CREDHOS workers had been ordered by the head of navy intelligence -- as well as the killings of some 100 trade unionists, journalists and political activists.

Aysel Malkaç, a 22-year-old journalist, "disappeared" in Istanbul in Turkey in August 1993. She was then working as a reporter on the Kurdish-owned newspaper *Özgür Gündem*.

Eye-witnesses reportedly saw her being detained in the street by plainclothes police officers but are too frightened to come forward. During the week before her "disappearance", *Özgür Gündem's* offices and staff had been under heavy surveillance by the police, who were patrolling streets in the neighbourhood and monitoring the newspaper's telephone calls. All efforts to establish

Aysel Malkaç's whereabouts have been unsuccessful, although a man who had been in custody at the time of her "disappearance" made a public declaration that he had seen her in police custody on about 8 August.

Fighting between the security forces and guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) has claimed more than 10,000 lives since 1984, when the PKK took up arms in support of an independent Kurdish state. *Özgür Gündem* is the only Kurdish-owned daily newspaper in Turkey. Since it was launched in May 1992 it has consistently reported human rights violations in the south east, where most of Turkey's Kurds live. The authorities are trying to close the paper permanently on the grounds that it makes "separatist propaganda" and "praises" the PKK. Six of the newspaper's journalists, and nine of its distributors and sellers have been murdered in the past 18 months in circumstances which suggest possible security force involvement or collusion.

Teacher Maritza Urrutia, a member of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the armed opposition coalition then engaged in peace talks with the government, was abducted at gunpoint in July 1992 by three men whom she said were military agents. She had just taken her four-year-old son to school in Guatemala City. She was driven to a building where she was interrogated about her activities, her family and her former husband, who is also a member of the URNG. Her captors told her they were from a "superclandestine organization" that took action against "subversives, drug traffickers and corrupt people". She noticed, however, that they were supplied with military equipment.

The interrogations continued for several days. Maritza was told that she and her son would be killed unless she cooperated. Eventually she broke down and told her captors she would do as they demanded. She was forced to record a video in which she admitted to belonging to "subversive organizations". Maritza was then released on 30 July but threatened that her family would suffer if she revealed what had happened. One week later she left Guatemala with her son. On 30 September 1992 she reported her abduction and captivity to the Inter-American Commission of Human rights, of the Organization of American States. The Guatemalan Government denies that the army was responsible.

Most women whose human rights are violated when wars break out are civilians taking no active part in the conflict. They are often from the marginalized and most vulnerable sectors of society: indigenous and peasant women living in zones of rural conflict, refugee and displaced women, fleeing from war, urban women active in political opposition organizations or related to male activists. But social standing does not always protect against abuse. In Afghanistan, racked by civil war between rival Mujahideen groups and warlords, educated women are at particular risk of human rights violations. Women working in professional jobs in government offices are prime targets. Some Mujahideen groups consider that education under the former government

"poisoned" women's minds and turned them against Islamic principles. Some women's offices and homes have been raided and several have been raped or otherwise tortured or ill-treated. Hundreds have fled the country. Women belonging to ethnic or religious minorities in Afghanistan have also been targeted.

The growth of conflict around the world has seen governments either unable to prevent or actively encouraging abuses to which women are most vulnerable. Rape by government agents is one of the more common abuses inflicted on women in times of conflict.

In Djibouti conflict between the government and the rebel Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy³ (FRUD) has escalated since August 1993. The FRUD has been fighting the government in the north and southwest of the country since 1991. Women and men from these areas who belong to the Afar ethnic group, from which the FRUD derives most of its support, have been victims of gross human rights violations and thousands have fled to Ethiopia as a result. Dozens of women have been raped by government soldiers; AI has the names of several of them but cannot publish them for fear of reprisals.

The rape of women has been widespread during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although all sides in the conflict have been responsible for torture and ill-treatment, the majority of victims have been Muslims and the main perpetrators local Serbian armed forces. Abuses against women often appear linked to a wider pattern of abuses, characterized by the indiscriminate use of force against particular ethnic groups. In view of the widespread reports of rape and sexual abuse in the former Yugoslavia, and similar conflicts elsewhere, AI has urged the UN to provide resources for counselling women who have been raped or sexually abused under such circumstances.

Rape by police and security force personnel has reached grave proportions in India. Rape is widely reported in states where armed conflict prevails, such as the seven states of northeast India where most victims of such rape are tribal women. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been the scene of fierce fighting between government troops and a variety of pro-independence groups since 1990. Gross human rights abuses on all sides have followed. Such abuses have included rape, mainly of Muslim women by government forces. In October 1992 soldiers raided the village of Chak Saidapora in search of a suspected militant. During the raid several women were reportedly raped, the eldest victim was a woman of 60, the youngest a girl of 11. In Peru, torn apart by civil war for more than a decade, women have been raped by troops engaged in counter-insurgency operations. Most of the victims have been peasant women, living in remote villages in the mountains. No one knows how many lives have been shattered as a result. In June 1992 Froily Mori Vela, a 14-year-old schoolgirl was raped after soldiers searched the family home in the village of La Unión, in San Martín department. When they finished the search, the soldiers forced Froily Mori outside at gunpoint. "They took me to the far end of the vegetable garden... one after another they raped me, starting with the lieutenant".

The risk of sexual assault faced by women caught up in conflicts was recognized long ago. The 1949 Geneva Conventions stipulate: "Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault". Yet few of the world's governments have taken steps to prevent their troops inflicting sexual abuse on women caught up in conflicts. In some countries, this is because women are considered second-class citizens; in others it is because soldiers are allowed to regard the rape of women as the legitimate spoils of war. Rape is also used systematically as a deliberate tactic to destroy or damage the "enemy". Whatever the reason, the international response has been uniformly and woefully inadequate.

In June 1993, the UN World Conference on Human Rights concluded in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action that the enjoyment of full and equal human rights by

women should be a priority for governments and that the UN itself. AI calls on the international community to take immediate action to ensure that women caught up in situations of armed conflict are protected from these violations.

In December 1993 the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. At the 50th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, taking place in early 1994, a proposal to create a Special Rapporteur on violence against women is to be debated. AI strongly supports the creation of a Special Rapporteur but believes her mandate should cover the full range of human rights violations suffered by women. This would provide a much-needed opportunity for the UN to integrate its work on abuses of women's human rights in preparation for the UN World Conference on Women to be held in September 1995.

ABUSES BY ARMED POLITICAL GROUPS

On 21 October 1993 Herminia Barboza Oré was cooking breakfast for her three children when armed men burst into her home in Lima, Peru's capital city. They shot and killed her in front of her children. Herminia Barboza was a community leader in her neighbourhood, Cruz de Mopui, in Lima's San Juan de Lurigancho district. Her killers are believed to have been members of the Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path (PCP), who have fought to overthrow the Peruvian state since the [early 1980s]. The PCP has consistently threatened and killed independent grassroots activists, arguing that their actions are counter-revolutionary.

The growth of nationalist, secessionist and ethnic conflicts which threaten all regions of the world with violence and bloodshed, has seen armed opposition groups adopt the methodology of state terror in pursuit of their goals. Women have not been spared. Some have been killed, raped or otherwise tortured, ill-treated, or taken hostage.

Armed Sikh groups fighting for independence for the Indian state of Punjab have abducted, raped and ill-treated women. Some women have been forced to marry members of these groups. Majir Kaur was kidnapped in Tarn Taran in June 1992 by members of the *Khalistan Liberation Army* (KLA). She was raped and forced to marry a member of the *Khalistan Commando Force*, which is loosely affiliated to the KLA. Rape by armed militant groups has also been reported from the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, gripped by civil war for the past four years. In February 1993 a 19-year-old woman from Handwara told journalists in Delhi that she had been raped by members of one of the militant groups, but had been prevented from speaking to journalists in Kashmir about her experiences.

Thiagarajah Selvanithy, a women's rights activist, was abducted two-and-half years ago by the LTTE, the armed group known as the "Tamil Tigers" who are seeking to establish a separate state in northeast Sri Lanka. In August 1991 she was dragged from her home by LTTE members who told her landlord that they would release her after questioning. At the time, she was a final year drama student at Jaffna University. She was due to appear in a play about a Palestinian prisoner. Thiagarajah Selvanithy was a prominent activist -- a member of the university's women's organization and a voluntary worker at a home for traumatized women. She was reputed to have been at the forefront to the struggle for women's rights in the Jaffna peninsula and elsewhere in the Sri Lanka. She had once been a member of the women's wing of the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam, a rival group to the LTTE, but was no longer a member when she was abducted. In November 1993 LTTE spokesperson Anton Balasingham told the Sri Lankan magazine *Counterpoint* that Thiagarajah Selvanithy was still alive in LTTE custody, as far as he knew. However, as the LTTE still have not revealed her whereabouts nor permitted her visitors, AI continues to fear for her safety.

i. Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu

ii. Front pour la restauration de l'unité de la démocratie