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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 10/93

Contained in this weekly update are embargoed external items on Sudan and Algeria and an internal item on the Nobel Peace Prize mission.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Australia - *1301 hrs gmt 10 February*

Please note that the embargo has been confirmed for 1301 hrs gmt, Wednesday 10 February for the news release and document on Aboriginal deaths and ill-treatment in custody. The embargo time has been chosen to coincide with Australian media.

Japan - 0500 hrs gmt, 17 March

Please note the embargo is confirmed for 0500 hrs gmt, 17 March for this document on refugee issues and we anticipate a high level of media interest in this news release. The Japanese Section requested the change in embargo to allow them to translate the document in time for a press briefing they will hold in Tokyo.

Chad - 21 April

Campaign, document, news release, Q&A and ENR.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Sri Lanka - 12 February

A weekly update and document about the Sri Lankan government's implementation of AI's recommendations, to coincide with the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. The Research Dept feel that it would be very helpful if high profile newspapers in Europe ran pieces on it - probably more feature based than news. The IS Press Office plans to send it to selected media.

Sudan - 19 February

Enclosed in this weekly update is an embargoed item on mass killings, ethnic displacement and gross human rights violations. Please note that this document is going to be used for lobbying during the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, and may therefore reach the media indirectly. If it does, we will immediately lift the embargo. The IS press office will therefore fax the weekly update item to media at the last moment. We recommend that if you are planning to seek publicity on this item that you do the same.

Algeria - 2 March

An embargoed document is being posted to section press officers by the Research Department to go with an item enclosed in this weekly update on human rights violations under the state of emergency.

Section Initiatives

French Section - European Press Officers' Meeting

The second European Press Officers' meeting will take place in Paris this year. The registration forms have not arrived yet, but when they do please send them to Luisa de Soriano or Josette Debord at the French Section Press Office before the end of February. The date of this meeting is now fixed for 15 and 16 May as the majority of you asked for. It will be focused on two themes: Audiovisual work (production and TV experiences) and how to improve it; and the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. The French Section Press Office will send the program to all participants during the last week of February. Many thanks.

Audio-visual News - World Conference on Human Rights

To help in preparing packages of video material for use in connection with the World Conference on Human Rights, the Media Unit would be most grateful if you could advise whether your section would be able to provide video footage under the following categories:

- 1) Footage of AI section and group campaigning activities and background footage illustrating the cities and towns in which these activities took place and the volunteers who undertook it;
- 2) Footage illustrating uses to which Electronic News Releases released by the Media Unit have been put by TV stations in your country or footage of press conferences held by your section;
- 3) Footage demonstrating the effectiveness of AI work through interviews with released prisoners or others in a position to confirm the effectiveness of our campaigning methods;

Ideally, footage in categories 1 and 3 should be freely available for international use and have no copyright restrictions attached. Footage in category 2 can be in the form of off-air recordings.

If your section has some footage to offer or has advice on where to acquire it, please contact Adam Lloyd in the Media Unit in the first instance. Your help in assisting this footage research effort will be much appreciated.

2. AFR 54/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR 19 FEBRUARY 1993

SUDAN: MASS KILLINGS, ETHNIC DISPLACEMENT AND OTHER GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE IN SUDAN

Alarming reports of gross human rights violations continue to emerge from Sudan, said Amnesty International in a report issued today.

"There are especially disturbing reports of mass killings in the remote Nuba Mountains - where the government is engaged in military action which appears to amount to 'ethnic cleansing'," said the organization.

"In the remote war zones of southern and western Sudan, where the government apparently feels free from international scrutiny, the authorities are flagrant in their disregard for human rights."

The most recent reports claim that hundreds of civilians have been extrajudicially executed in the Nuba Mountains in late December 1992 and early January 1993. The exact scale of these killings is not yet confirmed, but Amnesty International knows of scores of other extrajudicial executions in the Nuba Mountains in the past year, and tens of thousands of Nuba have been deliberately displaced in assaults on their villages by government forces.

In the south, the authorities have still not accounted for over 100 men arrested in Juba in mid-1992 who have since "disappeared". Hundreds of people were reportedly extrajudicially executed in Juba as government forces "mopped up" after incursions by the armed opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

In the major cities of northern Sudan, more accessible to the outside world, the government appears to be trying to make repression less visible rather than actually ending it. There is a continuing pattern of detention without charge or trial of government critics. Amnesty International knows the names of 250 political detainees who have been held without charge in Khartoum alone during the past year.

Suspected opponents of the government are also being made to report each morning to security offices where they are forced to remain until the evening - a restriction on their freedom of movement that amounts to detention.

On 28 January 1993, Mohamed Abdulsid, the Khartoum correspondent of the international Arabic language daily *Asharq al-Awsat*, was arrested and the newspaper's offices closed. These are measures which reduce the capacity of the outside world to learn what is happening in Sudan.

The SPLA, now split in three, is also responsible for serious human rights abuses. In January 1992 forces loyal to the SPLA (Nasir group) deliberately and arbitrarily killed 87 civilians at Pagarau in Bahr al-Ghazal State. In September 1992, SPLA (Torit group) forces murdered three foreign aid workers and a journalist.

Amnesty International believes the need for decisive action on behalf of human rights in Sudan has never been greater. The organization is calling on the international community to ensure that the situation in all parts of the country is closely and continually monitored.

Amnesty International is also calling on the Sudan Government and all factions of the SPLA to take immediate steps to end human rights abuses. The government should investigate all reports of human rights violations and bring those responsible to justice.

**3. MDE 28/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR 2 MARCH 1993**

ALGERIA: INCREASING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS UNDER STATE OF EMERGENCY

Over one year after a state of emergency was declared in Algeria, torture has become widespread and human rights violations have increased said an Amnesty International report issued today.

Since February 1992, over 9,000 suspected Islamic activists have been held in internment camps in the desert without charge or trial and over 1,000 are still administratively detained. About 300 people have been killed by the security forces, many in armed clashes. However, a significant number appear to have been innocent bystanders - deliberately killed while allegedly crossing police barriers, breaking the curfew or in other circumstances where they posed no threat of violence. No investigations have ever been made public into their deaths.

Over the last year, Amnesty International has repeatedly raised its concerns with the Algerian Government about the rapid deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. The organization is aware that over 270 security force members and up to 20 civilians have been killed in action by armed opposition groups. Amnesty International condemns the torture and killing of prisoners, and the deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians and others by armed opposition groups and calls on those responsible for such abuses to bring them to an end. However, such provocations should in no way be taken as justification for human rights violations by security forces.

The organization has received dozens of testimonies of torture and spoken to victims, their families and doctors. Their testimonies show that the practice of torture in Algeria - which had been virtually eradicated after 1989 - resumed after February 1992, and dramatically increased during the last quarter of 1992. Prisoners are most at risk of torture during *garde à vue* detention - when a detainee can be held incommunicado for interrogation without access to family or lawyer. In October 1992, an "anti-terrorist" law lengthened this period of detention to 12 days - already too long by international standards - and now it is often illegally extended to 25 days or more.

One of the most common means of torture described is the "chiffon" or "cloth" - whereby the detainee is tied to a bench and knelt on by police who hold the victim's nose, while a cloth soaked in dirty water or chemicals is thrust into his/her mouth. One detainee, tortured by this method, described seeing others with bloody faces and hearing the screams of male and female victims.

"The failure of the Algerian Government to publicly denounce torture or take strong measures to halt it suggests that those in authority are tolerating or condoning the practice," said Amnesty International. The organization is urging the government to take immediate steps to eradicate the use of torture by setting up mechanisms to ensure that: detention centres are frequently inspected; speedy access is given to detainees' families and lawyers; and all allegations of torture, ill-treatment or other abuses of detainees are thoroughly investigated - whether or not a formal complaint has been lodged.

Amnesty International is also concerned about a new "anti-terrorist" law which sets up special, secret courts to impose final verdicts within five months - allowing those brought before them only limited right of appeal. The new law also extends the death penalty and reduces to 16 the age of criminal responsibility. Amnesty International is concerned that executions have been carried out for the first time since 1989 and recently death sentences have been imposed for crimes other than murder. The organization opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life.

Amnesty International is calling for the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, release or trial of all those still administratively detained, and the abolition or substantive amendment of the "anti-terrorist" law.

On 7 February 1993, the Haut comité d'état, Higher State Committee, renewed the state of emergency indefinitely. In light of the serious human rights violations during the past year, Amnesty International fears the situation in Algeria will worsen unless its concerns are urgently addressed by the Algerian Government.

4. ASA 16/WU 02/93 INTERNAL
9 February 1993

FOLLOW-UP TO NOBEL LAUREATES DELEGATION TO MYANMAR

INTERNAL

This provides additional information to ASA 16/WU 01/93.

Reproduced below is the text of an Open Letter signed by Nobel Peace Prize Laureates that will be issued by a delegation of the laureates at a press conference in Bangkok on 16 February. Amnesty International is a signatory to the statement and Ros s Daniels, chair of the IEC, will participate in the delegation's press conference and other events in Thailand.

The delegation had sought permission to enter Myanmar to present the statement directly to the SLORC military government. However, entry visas were denied by the Myanmar authorities.

The Open Letter will be published in major international newspapers and receive coverage from other media. Sections are encouraged to use this statement in their publicity activities and in campaigning work in support of Amnesty International's concerns in relation to Myanmar. The Open Letter should be considered to be under strict EMBARGO until 16 February.

EXTERNAL

EMBARGOED FOR 16 FEBRUARY 1993

An Open Letter from the Nobel Peace Laureates
to the State Law and Order Restoration Council of Burma
Appealing for the Release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

We, the undersigned Nobel Peace Laureates, write to express our grave concern over the continued detention in Burma of our sister laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the illegal State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)'s denial of her fundamental rights of free speech and political association. Along with hundreds of other political prisoners, she remains illegally detained in Burma and must be set free.

The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations demonstrate the strength of world opinion concerning Aung San Suu Kyi's plight. We join the international community in calling for her immediate and unconditional release and for the restoration of democracy in Burma.

In awarding the Peace Prize in 1991, the Nobel Committee commended Aung San Suu Kyi for her particular integrity and self-sacrifice, and her consistent and effective practice of Gandhian principles of non-violence in the face of severe threats to her life and to those of her followers. The Committee singled out her insistence on the primacy of human rights and equality of justice for all of Burma's ethnic minorities. It is indeed tragic that these values and practices have resulted in Aung San Suu Kyi's detention.

In 1988, the SLORC's predecessors in the military government acquiesced to the requests of the people of Burma to hold democratic elections and engage in the democratic process. No sooner had our sister laureate Aung San Suu Kyi become leader of the National League for Democracy, then she was jailed for her political activities, eight months prior to the election.

Despite the imprisonment of their leader, the democratic party she led while in detention won an overwhelming majority of seats in the national Parliament. Soon after these elections the SLORC also incarcerated many democratically elected politicians for taking part in the democratic process.

Despite an indomitable spirit and courage, she languishes under house arrest - silenced for her desire to serve her people and imprisoned for her ability to do so.

The isolation of Aung San Suu Kyi for three and a half years belies the SLORC's declared intention to allow a transition to civilian rule. During most of this period, she had been denied access even to her immediate family. Following Gandhian precepts, she has fasted in protest not only against her own detention, but also the imprisonment of her followers.

It is time the SLORC realized that the current repression sustained by violence, cruelty and torture only prolong the uncertainty of Burma's future as a nation.

With the support of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal, Canada, a number of our fellow Nobel Peace Laureates intended to travel to Rangoon, Burma. Their objective was to meet with the highest officials of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, and to secure the immediate and unconditional release of our imprisoned sister Laureate and the hundreds of other prisoners of conscience whose only crime against the state has been the non-violent expression of their beliefs.

The visas to enter Burma were denied by the SLORC regime and today, the Mission is travelling to the Thai-Burma border in order to receive personal accounts of the continuing human rights atrocities occurring in Burma.

As fellow recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize, we are honoured to affirm our admiration and support for Aung San Suu Kyi, and for the struggle for human rights in Burma which she personifies. She has written that, "those who wish to build a nation... must first free their own minds from apathy and fear".

We call on the State Law and Order Restoration Council to honour its commitment to the elected National Assembly, to free Aung San Suu Kyi and all the Assembly members currently imprisoned, to allow the democratically elected civilian government to rule in its own sphere, and thus to permit the constitutional process to begin anew.

If the State Law and Order Restoration Council is truly committed to the future of Burma, they must free Aung San Suu Kyi without condition and without delay.