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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 29/93

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Chad - 21 April

Please Note

The document to go with this campaign has been sent out to sections dated February. Please inform your section campaign coordinators and anyone else who may receive it that it is EMBARGOED FOR 21 APRIL.

Chad Campaign, document, news release, Q&A and ENR. The news release should be with you by 2 April, the Q&A shortly afterward.

Bangladesh - 28 April

Document on serious human rights violations in Bangladesh, accompanied either by a news release or an embargoed weekly update item.

Tadzhikistan - 5 May

Publication and news release on killings in the context of civil war - with striking similarities to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Morocco - 14 April

Document and weekly update item - the IS will be sending this only to selected media (largely Arabic speaking).

China - 16 April

Document and embargoed weekly update item on torture, timed to coincide with China reporting to the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT). China is scheduled to appear on 23 April - media are entitled to attend and we will be encouraging contacts to do so.

Brazil - 7 May

Please note new embargo date. Document on prison massacre, including new forensic information. Weekly update item to go with it. Sections are also being asked to carry out campaign work in connection with this document.

Unconfirmed news initiatives

News releases or embargoed weekly update items are being considered on the following subjects:

Malawi (May)

Indigenous people (to go with May Focus article)

Guatemala (May)

Egypt (late May)

World Conference (early June)

Nagorno-Karabakh (to go with possible action, May)

Aceh, Indonesia (July)

Section Initiatives

French Section - European Press Officers' Meeting

The second European Press Officers' meeting will take place in Paris this year. 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.

European World Conference Press Briefing in June

The British Section Press Office has been talking to the EC project office and the Francophone Belgium Press Officer about holding a European press briefing in Brussels for MEPs and for journalists who will be covering the World Conference. The date will probably be Tuesday, June 8th in the morning. The aim will be to look at the EC's role as a whole in terms of its internal shortcomings (Asylum issues, etc), external policies - aid/development, etc, and also to look at Europe's role within the UN.

Although the idea has been suggested by the British Section, it is hoped that all European Section Press Officers will be interested in being involved. For further information please contact either Daphne Davies, in the British Section Press Office or Johannes in the EC project office.

2. EUR 63/WU 02/93 EXTERNAL
1 April 1993

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: AI CONCERNED OVER DEATH SENTENCES

Amnesty International has expressed concern over death sentences imposed upon two Serbs, Borislav Herak and Sretko Damjanovi_. The two men were sentenced to death by a military court in Sarajevo on 30 March 1993 on charges of genocide, rape and looting. The organization is urging that if either or both of these death sentences are upheld on appeal, President Izetbegovi_ exercise his authority to grant clemency and commute the sentences.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the trial may have been unfair. According to press reports, the convictions of these two men were largely based on the self-incriminating statements of Borislav Herak, for which there was apparently little corroborating evidence.

Amnesty International recognizes the extraordinary gravity of the crimes of which Borislav Herak and Sretko Damjanovic have been convicted and has repeatedly urged that those responsible for human rights abuses be brought to justice.

However, the organization is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty in all cases, as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Borislav Herak, who earlier in the trial had said he wished to be punished by the death penalty, said he raped 16 Muslim women and killed 11 of them. On 30 March he reportedly told the court he deserved the death penalty.

However, his co-defendant, Sretko Damjanovi_, has denied the charges against him and retracted what he alleged was a false confession extracted from him by guards who beat him in prison following his arrest in November 1992. A court-appointed doctor instructed by the court to examine him during the trial reportedly concluded that he bore scars consistent with these allegations. Sretko Damjanovi_ has said that he will appeal against his sentence. Amnesty International notes that Article 15 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment prohibits the use of statements made as a result of torture as evidence against the accused.

At the trial psychiatric experts reportedly testified that Sretko Damjanovi_ was sane and responsible for his actions but concluded that Borislav Herak's mental state was one of diminished responsibility. Borislav Herak's lawyer argued that the court-appointed psychiatrists had not proved that his client was able to control his actions.

He also argued that under Bosnian law Borislav Herak could not be convicted solely on the basis of his own testimony. Sretko Damjanovi_'s lawyer pointed to inconsistencies in Borislav Herak's testimony and concluded that he had made it up.