
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 139/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 27 OCTOBER 1993

AI INDEX: NWS 11/139/93
DISTR: SC/PO
NO OF WORDS: 2680

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - BURUNDI, INDIA, SRI LANKA
INTERNAL - BURUNDI

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

PLEASE NOTE: We are still urgently awaiting brief evaluations from you on media coverage of the EJE's campaign launch. Please send a quick note describing: whether coverage in your country was good; which major tv/radio/newspapers covered the story; what worked well (eg. press conference/event/offering interviews with victims/etc.). Over the next few weeks we would appreciate more comprehensive evaluations, but the urgent need is for a quick overview from your perspective (by Monday). Thanks, Paula.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

USA - 24 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 132
Pakistan - 7 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137
India - 15 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137
**Iran - 17 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138
Venezuela - 10 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 121

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Algeria - 28 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 127/138
Papua New Guinea - 19 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138
Human Rights Day Speech - 9 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

1994
Tunisia - 12 January
South Africa - 19 January
Colombia - 16 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56-57/93

*

News Service 139/93

AI INDEX: AFR 16/WU 02/93
27 OCTOBER 1993

BURUNDI: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR END TO KILLINGS

Amnesty International has called for an end to the wave of killings of defenceless men, women and children which has engulfed Burundi since a coup attempt last week - and is also calling for all those responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

The calls come amid political confusion in Burundi, with neither government nor military having absolute control. There have been calls from the military for an amnesty for those responsible for the murder last week of the President and other senior government officials, while on the other hand the Prime Minister has called for tough punishments for the coup leaders.

Said Amnesty International: "It is essential that human rights violators are brought to justice - otherwise the cycle of violence that has decimated Burundi for years will just continue. However, while seeking to punish those responsible for these killings, the authorities should not use means which result in further human rights violations."

The international human rights organization has continued to receive reports of bloodshed across the country, following the overthrow and murder of President Melchior Ndadaye on Thursday 21 October 1993. He and senior government officials including the Minister of the Interior, Juvenal Ndayikeza, were detained by soldiers early on 21 October and reportedly executed at a military camp later the same day.

Amnesty International has condemned the executions and is seriously concerned at the increasing violence in Burundi's countryside since then, with defenceless civilians killed on account of their ethnic origin. The army, composed predominantly of members of the Tutsi minority, has in the past carried out indiscriminate killings of villagers belonging to the Hutu majority. President Ndadaye was himself a Hutu, and his death is reported to have sparked revenge killings by armed Hutu targeting Tutsi, as well as killings by armed Tutsi of Hutu.

In a radio broadcast to Burundi on 21 October Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sané called on the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Bikomagu, to ensure that human rights were upheld and that those responsible for violations would be brought to justice.

"Soldiers must be told that they will be held accountable for any loss of life and the killing of civilians", said Mr Sané. "Burundi's history is one of mass killings - the bloodshed between the Tutsi and Hutu peoples must not be repeated".

The latest killings occur just four months after Burundi's first-ever presidential elections brought President Ndadaye to power, ending years of political domination by the Tutsi minority, after a four-and-a-half year long process of reforms to bring about national reconciliation. Ironically, these included the adoption in March 1992 of a new constitution designed to prevent any repetition of the massacres and inter-communal killing which have scarred Burundi's past.

After learning of the latest killings, Amnesty International is calling on all of those who have taken up arms in Burundi to respect the most basic human rights proclaimed in the country's constitution:

"Every individual has a right to life, and to the security of his person and his physical integrity." (Article 13)

["Ubuzima bw'umuntu wese butegerezwa gusonerwa n'ukwubahirizwa."]

["Chacun a droit à la vie, à la sûreté de sa personne et à son intégrité physique."]

ENDS/

INTERNAL

News Service 139/93

AI INDEX: AFR 16/WU 03/93 INTERNAL
27 OCTOBER 1993

BURUNDI - RESPONSE TO KILLINGS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE COUP OF 21 OCTOBER

Attached is an external statement, for response only, outlining AI's position on the human rights situation in Burundi following the military coup of 21 October. This statement is in the form of an appeal to all parties in Burundi - civilians as well as the security forces - to prevent further killings and violence and to respect and protect human rights in this critical period of tension and uncertainty. Please note that it refers to an initial appeal made by radio by AI Secretary General, Pierre Sané, at a time when all telecommunications links with Burundi were closed.

IS strategy discussions

In the light of the situation which broke out after the coup, we have held several urgent discussions in the IS on the most effective way of trying to prevent further human rights violations in Burundi. We have been faced with a number of difficulties, notably difficulty in communication and hence in receiving precise and up to date information about the human rights situation.

The other major difficulty in organizing action at this time is the absence of any one body or group of individuals controlling the country who could be addressed by AI and asked to prevent further violations. It appears that the members of the military who organized the coup are now reluctant to take control of the country and are seeking negotiations with the government to return them to power in exchange for an amnesty. To date this offer has been categorically rejected by the Prime Minister, who, along with other government officials, is in hiding in the French embassy.

AI delegation in Burundi

An AI delegation happened to be in Burundi at the time of the coup. We have been able to contact them and we know that they are safe. They have now managed to leave the country and are expected back in Europe in the next couple of days.

Their presence in the country at the time of the coup and considerations relating to their personal security were foremost in our minds at this time and were among the decisive factors in strategy discussions and in the decision to postpone any high profile membership action for a short while.

News statement

The attached statement is now being issued as a first step to enable sections to respond to journalists and others inquiring about AI's position on these events. For the moment, sections are asked to use it for response only and to inform the AI membership about AI's concerns. This is because we are expecting the AI delegation back in the next day or so, and we hope that they will be able to update us on the situation.

IGO approaches

At the international level, on 21 October (the day of the coup which also happened to be African Day of Human and Peoples' Rights), AI immediately approached the Chair and the Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) asking them to exercise their good offices to try to prevent massive human rights violations in Burundi. The UN Security Council and the OAU have both issued statements expressing grave concern at the situation in Burundi, regretting the violence and appealing for peace.

Information gathering

We would be grateful to any sections who are able to assist the IS in the task of gathering information about the situation on the ground in Burundi. For example, at present we are not able to ascertain the number of victims of killings or their identity; this applies particularly to reports of widespread violence by armed civilians in the rural areas. Evidently, we are aware of general reports of killings in rural areas but would welcome any detailed or eyewitness accounts.

We hope that in the next few days, we will receive more information from our delegates who visited Burundi. In the meantime, if there are members of development or relief organizations or journalists from your country returning from Burundi, please try to identify them and contact them on their return to try to obtain more information about the current human rights situation to complement AI's.

Please keep the Research Team at the IS informed of the result of these approaches. Many thanks.

Media coverage

From the IS we are monitoring the situation closely but we would be grateful if sections could also send us any interesting or extensive news coverage from their country.

Future membership action

Following the return of our delegation from Burundi, we hope to be able to organize some more concerted membership action on Burundi to prevent further human rights violations. We are planning to discuss the options in the next few days and we will inform sections as soon as the possibilities open to us become clearer.

AI INDEX: ASA 20/WU 10/93
27 OCTOBER 1993

INDIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED BY RISING DEATH TOLL IN SRINAGAR

Amnesty International has faxed a letter to General K V Krishna Rao, Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, noting with deep concern that the death toll of those who died in Friday's shootings by the security forces in Srinagar has risen to 51.

The victims include at least one woman and four teenagers. Most died when the Border Security Forces (BSF) apparently fired indiscriminately at protestors in Bijbehara, trapping hundreds of demonstrators after blocking both ends of the main street. Visiting journalists wanting to report the incident claim they were harassed by the security forces.

Amnesty International appreciates that the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir has reportedly ordered compensation to be paid to all the victims, and that the BSF unit in Bijbehara has been ordered to be withdrawn. The organization also notes that the army ordered soldiers in Srinagar to exercise the utmost restraint when dealing with the demonstrators. Amnesty International is encouraged by reports that an inquiry will be held into the killings. However, some reports suggest that it will be conducted by a senior official of the BSF itself, while others suggest that a judicial inquiry will be held.

Amnesty International is convinced of the importance of fully clarifying the circumstances in which so many civilians were shot dead by the security forces. This should be done by an inquiry which is both credible and authoritative. The human rights organization therefore reiterates its appeal that the inquiry should be conducted by a fully independent and impartial body, such as a judicial authority; that its findings be published in full; and that if evidence emerges that members of the security forces are responsible for extrajudicial executions of demonstrators, they be brought to justice.

Amnesty International also requested all relevant information about the nature of the inquiry to be held and the mandate of the inquiry commission. Furthermore, it requested details of the instructions given to the security forces personnel regarding the use of lethal fire against demonstrators as well as the measures the government may be taking to prevent further such killings. Finally, Amnesty International requested any information about the measures the government may now be taking to provide compensation to the victims of Friday's shootings, notably regarding the time when the compensation will be paid and the names of the victims who will receive compensation and redress.

ENDS/

AI INDEX: ASA 37/WU 04/93
27 OCTOBER 1993

SRI LANKA: MORE THAN A THOUSAND ARBITRARILY ARRESTED AND AT LEAST SIX HELD IN UNACKNOWLEDGED DETENTION

Despite promises by the Sri Lankan Government to safeguard Tamils from arbitrary detention, well over a thousand members of the Tamil community have been arbitrarily arrested in the capital, Colombo, and its suburbs since 15 October and at least six have been held in unacknowledged detention.

"The latest arrests show a complete failure by the Sri Lankan Government to implement the measures which it agreed with Tamil political leaders in June - which were intended to safeguard Tamils from just this kind of abuse," said Amnesty International.

Some of those recently arrested have been taken away by men in police or military uniform, others by officers wearing civilian dress, often in the middle of the night. In some cases the arrests had still not been acknowledged by the police three or four days after the arrest and despite the explicit promise made in June that relatives of detainees would be informed of where prisoners were being taken, relatives often do not know where they are held.

"Since June, there have been several waves of such arrests forming part of a pattern of human rights violations directed at the Tamil community, in which thousands of people appear to have been arrested solely on the basis of their ethnic origin," said Amnesty International.

The first wave of arrests followed soon after elections to provincial councils had been held in June. Since then thousands have been arrested, apparently in connection with investigations into the assassinations of opposition leader Lalth Athulathmudali and President Ranasinghe Premadasa on 23 April and 1 May respectively, and with reports that the armed opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have infiltrated the city. Police attributed both assassinations to the LTTE, which is engaged in armed conflict with government forces to establish a separate state in the northeast of the island.

The most recent mass arrests began on the night of 15 October following a statement by the Defence Ministry that a body-bomb (to be worn by a suicide bomber) had been found in a box on a beach at Modera, north of Colombo, on 14 October. The bomb was said to be of the type used to kill both former President Premadasa earlier in the year and the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in 1991, raising fears that LTTE suicide squads may have entered the city.

Many of those arrested were released within hours or days. Hundreds, however, have reportedly been kept in custody - from 15 to 17 October, for example, some 1,500 Tamil people were reportedly arrested in the Colombo area, of whom 500 were kept in detention.

Reports received in the past three months suggest that in many cases there are no valid grounds for arrest and that people are simply held in custody while police check their identities and whether there is any existing intelligence information about them. Amnesty International called on the government in June to ensure that people are only arrested when there are grounds to do so.

Some people have been repeatedly arrested in recent months despite government assurances in June 1993 that certificates would be issued on an individual's release to ensure that they would not be rearrested for routine questioning. For example, a young man arrested by police at Modera on 20 October was eventually traced by his relatives to Kotahena police station, and was expected to be released. He had been detained and released three times previously.

Amnesty International is concerned that the way in which people are being taken into custody is reminiscent of the manner in which thousands of people were detained in the south between 1988 and 1990, when the government was seeking to suppress an insurgency by the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (People's Liberation Front). The lack of proper procedural safeguards on arrest and detention enabled tens of thousands of people to "disappear" in custody in that period.

Amnesty International has appealed to the authorities to investigate the whereabouts, and ensure the safety of the six individuals whose arrests have not yet been acknowledged and whose whereabouts remain unknown. The organization is also urging the government of Sri Lanka to ensure that the safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention agreed to in June are fully implemented, to take effective action against officers who fail to enforce them, and to ensure that arrests by officers in civilian clothes cease.

ENDS/