
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 164/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - SOUTH AFRICA
INTERNAL - CORRECTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS DAY SPEECH & NEWS RELEASE

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

PLEASE NOTE: The President of Cote d'Ivoire, Felix Houphouet Boigny, died yesterday and as a result the section there is postponing the press conference they planned on Friday 10 December to launch Waby Spider's cassette. Waby Spider's cassette will still be launched on Friday without the press conference, so if you are doing any work on this, it can go ahead. I will inform you of new Cote d'Ivoire section plans when I hear from them.

PLEASE NOTE: The France RAN office has moved to EFAL. Their new numbers are Tel: +44 59 29 96, Fax: +44 59 29 94.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

India - 15 December - PLEASE SEE NEWS SERVICE 159

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

****South Africa - 9 December****

The item is enclosed and may be used in connection with the Nobel Peace Prize being presented on Friday - although of course we have no position on who wins this award. Sorry for the delay. The IS is sending it to South African media.

Human Rights Day Speech - 9 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 162

****Bahrain - 16 December****

Apologies for not including this in the news initiatives before. This item was sent out in News Service 163 this morning and is embargoed for 16 December. It is to go with the report: Bahrain: Banned from Bahrain: Forcible exile of Bahraini nationals, AI Index: MDE 11/04/93. The IS will be sending it to international media, particularly Middle East.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES 1994

Children - 7 January - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

Tunisia - 12 January

USA death penalty - 26 January - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

South Africa - 16 February SEE NEWS SERVICE 159

Women - 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

Colombia - 16 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56-57/93

INTERNAL NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS

****CORRECTION TO PIERRE SANE'S SPEECH ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE 1990S****

The speech and news release sent to sections have an error relating to the High Commissioner on Human Rights. It is important that both the text of the speech and the news release be corrected.

Speech

In the section of the speech entitled "What governments must do", paragraph four we state: "We have just heard that this post has been agreed in principle by the UN -- good news indeed. We now ask the UN to ensure that the High Commissioner is given the authority, mandate and resources to address the gaps and failings in the UN human rights system"

This reference should be changed to read: "We ask the UN to ensure that the post is established, and is given the authority, mandate and resources to address the gaps and failings in the UN human rights system."

News release

On page two of the news release we state: "The UN General Assembly meeting in New York is now at a critical stage in the debate on the establishment of a High Commissioner, which has been agreed in principle. Many governments, however, have made clear their resistance to a commissioner who could take really effective action to protect human rights."

This reference should be changed to read: "The UN General Assembly meeting in New York is now at a critical stage in the debate on the establishment of a High Commissioner, and many governments have made clear their resistance to a commissioner who could take really effective action to protect human rights."

PLEASE NOTE: The news release should be AI Index: IOR 40/02/93. The speech should be AI Index: IOR 40/03/93.

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News Service 164/93

AI INDEX: AFR 53/WU 05/93
9 DECEMBER 1993

SOUTH AFRICA: VIOLENT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES JEOPARDIZE PROSPECTS FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTION

Amnesty International appealed today to President F W de Klerk and to leading representatives in the newly-established Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to urgently implement measures to reduce violent human rights abuses, which are jeopardizing the prospects of a free and fair election next year.

In letters sent to the State President, Nelson Mandela, Dr Dawie de Villiers, Roelf Meyer, Colin Eglin and Cyril Ramaphosa, Amnesty International acknowledged that the continuing lack of broad party acceptance of the Interim Constitution and the authority of the TEC poses a serious challenge to the new body, as well as threatening the stability of the transition process. However Amnesty emphasised that the government and the TEC are obliged to ensure that the planned elections can be conducted in an atmosphere free of fear - whether the fear is of violent attack or of arbitrary detention and torture.

The human rights organization called upon the government and the TEC to ensure that the authorities respond promptly and impartially to situations of violence; that any arrests made are carried out lawfully and with due respect for the basic rights of those detained; and that legal impediments to freedom of assembly and association are removed swiftly from the statute books. This is most urgent with respect to the nominally independent "homeland" of Bophuthatswana, where the authorities continue to use restrictive legislation, arbitrary detentions and unjustified, excessive force to curb public, political activities.

In their efforts to restore or maintain peace in this pre-election period, the government and the TEC ought to also give urgent attention to establishing locally-supported police complaints investigation units with sufficient powers and resources. They should also support the initiatives of those local police who are committed to being accountable to the communities they serve, and to facilitate swift investigations leading to prosecutions where appropriate of members of the security forces and others implicated in human rights violations.

Amnesty International expressed concern that, in certain parts of the country, positive initiatives by police station commanders - who have committed themselves to a process of consultation and accountability to the local communities - as well as the efforts of grassroots community peacemakers, are being undermined by a variety of factors, including:

- the interventions of members of the Internal Stability Unit (ISU) who are not accountable to the local communities in which they operate and do not appear to report even to the local station commander regarding their activities in that commander's area of responsibility;
- the conduct of some members of the ISU who raid homes at night gratuitously using violence against the residents and destroying their property;
- the lack of an effective witness protection program, as well as rigorous investigations and prosecutions of killers who are terrorizing certain communities, creating an atmosphere of impunity and suspicions of bias; and
- the lack of will on the part of the leadership and command structure of the KwaZulu Police to ensure that the members of the force refrain from unlawful acts of political violence against perceived opponents of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the KwaZulu Government.

Also undermining positive local initiatives is the continuing use of torture by certain units of the police force. Although the South African Government signed the UN Convention Against Torture in January 1993, there is strong evidence that verbal threats of violence, serious assaults and systematic torture have remained endemic features of being arrested and taken into police custody - whether in

connection with criminal investigations or for political reasons. Among the latter, victims have included members and supporters of the African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress and the IFP. Similar conclusions have also been drawn and conveyed to Amnesty International's representatives by, among others, investigators with the Goldstone Commission, Police Reporting Officers, and members of the international observer missions.

These abuses undermine efforts by some members of the South African police force, by peace committees and others to establish consultative structures as a means of building trust between the police and black communities, and, as such, directly threaten the prospects for peace.

Amnesty International expressed concern that, in this context, the Pretoria authorities have failed to give their support to important regional initiatives, including a proposed police complaints investigation unit. The terms of this unit were successfully negotiated this year between the Natal regional representatives of the South African Police, ANC and IFP, with the assistance of the Goldstone Commission and independent lawyers. Other initiatives, such as by the Wits/Vaal Peace Committee intended to, among other things, commit the Internal Stability Unit to a system of reporting to the local station commanders of their arrests, searches and other operations carried out locally, have failed to gain the necessary high level support. Amnesty International believes that in the context of the disastrous situations on the East Rand and in parts of Natal, these failures are inexplicable.

ENDS/