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Amnesty International

International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 8DJ
United Kingdom

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FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

AND ITS WORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

THE BEGINNING

- Amnesty International was launched in 1961 by British lawyer Peter Benenson.
- His newspaper appeal, "The Forgotten Prisoners", was published worldwide on 28 May 1961 and brought in more than 1,000 offers of support for the idea of an international campaign to protect human rights.
- Within 12 months the new organization had sent delegations to four countries to make representations on behalf of prisoners, and had taken up 210 cases. Amnesty International members had organized national bodies in seven countries. The first year's expenditure was £6,040.
- The principles of strict impartiality and independence were established. The emphasis was on the international protection of human rights: Amnesty International members were to act on cases worldwide and not become involved in cases in their own countries.

TODAY

- Amnesty International has more than 1,100,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in over 150 countries and territories and over 6,000 Amnesty International volunteer groups in over 74 countries.
- There are nationally organized sections in 47 countries, 26 of them in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.
- The organization's nerve centre is the International Secretariat in London, with over 270 staff from more than 40 countries. The Secretary General is Ian Martin.
- Amnesty International is governed by a nine-member International Executive Committee (IEC). It comprises eight volunteer members, elected every two years by an International Council comprising representatives of the worldwide movement, and an elected member of the International Secretariat.

HELPING THE VICTIMS

- Amnesty International has a precise mandate, detailed in an international statute. Its activities focus on prisoners and the main focus of its campaigning is to:

- free all prisoners of conscience. **These are people detained anywhere for their beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or language – who have not used or advocated violence;**
- ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners;
- abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel treatment of prisoners;
- end extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

Amnesty International also opposes abuses by opposition groups: hostage taking, torture and killings of prisoners and other arbitrary killings.

- **Since 1961 Amnesty International has adopted or investigated more than 43,500 cases. Each case may involve one individual or many. Of these cases, over 39,900 are now closed.**

Amnesty International members around the world work on behalf of prisoners threatened with imprisonment, unfair trials, torture or execution. This year's activities are an indication of the level of work done every year on behalf of prisoners.

In the first eleven months of 1991:

- **Amnesty International was working on more than 2,500 cases involving more than 3,500 individuals from countries worldwide; these cases concerned adoption of prisoners of conscience or their investigation as possible prisoners of conscience. Action began on 950 new cases involving more than 1,100 individuals.**
- **The good news is that 1,236 cases were closed in the first six months of 1991.**
- **To get emergency help to prisoners and others threatened with torture or death, an Urgent Action network of around 50,000 volunteers in 71 countries is organized through electronic mail, telex, fax, express and airmail to sent fast appeals by telegram, telex, fax or express or airmail if none of the more rapid methods is available.**

In the first 11 months of 1991 the network went into action 720 times to help people in 72 countries. Each Urgent Action can generate several thousand urgent appeals to the authorities within a matter of days.

These appeals included the following: 114 were prompted by reports of torture and 20 in cases where prisoners were in urgent need of medical treatment. 125 appeals related to extrajudicial executions or "disappearances" and 95 were made on behalf of prisoners sentenced to death. 37 appeals related to death and 17 to ill-treatment. Other appeals were issued in cases of arbitrary arrest, prolonged incommunicado detention, detention without charge or trial, unfair trial, death in custody, risk of refoulement, amputation, hunger-strikes, attempted abductions and harassment.

- **75 Medical Actions were launched to help prisoners. These actions involve about 8,000 health professionals organized in medical groups in over 30 countries who appeal on behalf of sick prisoners without adequate medical attention, those tortured or threatened with the death penalty and on cases of deaths in detention. In some instances medical skills are abused and used against prisoners, such as judicial amputations, flogging and the death penalty.**
- **The number of groups working in a Regional Action Network (RAN) exceeded 2,400. RAN members concentrate their work on any one of five regions of the world to assist people subjected to any of the human rights abuses that Amnesty International opposes in almost all of the world's countries. In the first 11 months of 1991 groups working in the 21 RANs joined more than 100 calls for action.**
- **In the first 11 months of 1991 Amnesty International issued 124 major documents on human rights violations in 56 countries. The reports covered a range of human rights violations committed in the context of the Gulf War and torture, "disappearances" and extra judicial executions in Kuwait following the withdrawal of Iraqi forces; "barbaric" abuses of women in more than 40 countries; unfair trials in Israel/Occupied Territories; torture and EJs by all sides in the Yugoslavian conflict; massacre in East Timor; torture in Egypt and Mexico; ill-treatment and security force killings in UK and EJs in Mauritania.**

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-- In the first 11 months of 1991 the organization sent 91 delegations to 57 countries. Delegates discussed Amnesty International's concerns with government authorities, observed political trials and carried out on-the-spot investigations into human rights abuses. The countries visited ranged from the United States of America to South Africa and from Austria to Peru. The organization has made over 1010 visits to different countries since 1961.

THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE

Every year, Amnesty International produces a global report which details human rights violations against men, women and children in all regions of the world. The 1991 annual report, which detailed abuses during 1990, is indicative of the kinds and levels of abuses against people every year. According to that report:

Prisoners

- Prisoners of conscience - jailed solely for the peaceful exercise of their basic human rights - were held in some 80 countries.
- More than 55 countries detained political prisoners without charge or trial and 44 jailed political prisoners after unfair trials.

Torture and ill-treatment

- Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners were reported in more than 100 countries and deaths attributed to torture, inhuman prison conditions or "suspicious" circumstances in over 40 countries.

"Disappearances"/killings

- People "disappeared" or were held in secret detention in more than 25 countries. That number includes several of the countries where people "disappeared" in previous years.
- Suspected government opponents or critics were apparently extrajudicially killed by official security forces or by "death squads" said to be linked to the governments in at least 29 countries.

Death Penalty

- During 1990 2,029 prisoners are known to have been executed in 29 countries. The true figures are certainly higher. Others were sentenced to death or remained on death row from previous years in more than 60 countries.
- During 1990 seven countries abolished the death penalty for all offences (Andorra, the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Mozambique, Namibia and Sao Tome and Principe) and one (Nepal) abolished it for common crimes.
- By November 1991 44 countries were abolitionist in law for all crimes, 16 restricted the penalty to exceptional offences, and 20 others had abolished the death penalty in practice;
- 96 countries and territories retained and used the death penalty for ordinary crimes
- Four countries (China, Iran, Nigeria and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) accounted for 84 per cent of all executions recorded in 1990.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS AND TREATIES WORLDWIDE

Today an ever-growing human rights constituency is gathering the facts on abuses by governments, taking action to stop them and strengthening the forces necessary to prevent future violations.

- Over 1,000 domestic and regional organizations are working to protect basic human rights;
- An increasing body of international human rights agreements hold governments accountable for their actions;
- 99 governments are now party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and 104 governments are party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These covenants require countries ratifying them to recognize or protect a wide range of human rights;
- 59 states are now party to the Optional Protocol to the (first) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Protocol establishes procedures allowing both individuals and states to present complaints of human rights violations;
- 10 states are now party 2nd Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty;

- 63 governments are now party to the United Nations Convention against Torture.

THE MONEY

Amnesty International's funding reflects the movement's independence and its reliance on broad public support. No money is sought or received from governments. The hundreds of thousands of donations that sustain the organization's work come from the pockets of its members and the public.

The international budget for 1991 is over £11,000,000. This does not include funds needed to maintain the operations of the national bodies in individual countries or the costs of the thousands of letters and telegrams sent every month by individual members around the world.

The international budget is spent on professional research by Amnesty International staff into human rights violations worldwide, on delegations that observe trials and make representations to governments, and on the administration of the movement's international publishing, campaigning and development activities.

The international nerve centre for this unique operation, the International Secretariat, runs on just over £90 a minute. Some of the costs:

- launching a life-saving appeal on behalf of a prisoner threatened with torture or death: £40 in telex bills alone;
- running the research, missions and information systems that are involved in taking up the case of an individual prisoner of conscience (average cost): £450 a case;
- sending a delegation to meet government officials and conduct on the spot fact-finding (average cost): £2,140.