Horn of Africa new renditions hotspot

“...it was an eternal waiting.”

A woman held incommunicado in Kenya and Ethiopia for more than three months

Scores of men, women and children arrested in Kenya while trying to escape from war-torn Somalia were unlawfully transferred to Somalia and then to Ethiopia in early 2007. They became victims of rendition - transferred in secret from one country to another outside any legal process. Some are still detained in Ethiopia. Some are missing.

At least 140 people were arrested by Kenyan authorities between 30 December 2006 and February 2007 as they tried to enter Kenya from Somalia. They were held without charge in several police stations in Nairobi and in Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. They were allowed no access to their relatives. If they wanted to claim asylum they could not, as they were denied access to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees or any asylum procedure.

After weeks in Kenyan custody, 85 detainees were unlawfully transferred to Somalia, and 81 further on to Ethiopia. While in custody in Ethiopia, many of the detainees were questioned by US agents.

Former detainees have alleged that several were tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Two women, who were heavily pregnant when arrested, gave birth behind bars. All were subject to unlawful inter-state transfers as the practice of renditions appears to be spreading.

The Ethiopian authorities have acknowledged detaining only 41 people. Four UK citizens were released in Somalia and returned to the UK. That means that 40 detainees who were unlawfully transferred are missing. In addition, 27 detainees do not appear on any of the passenger lists of unscheduled flights to Somalia. Their whereabouts are also unknown.

There is no further news about Canadian national Bashir Ahmed Makkatul, who is still thought to be detained incommunicado at the police Central Investigation Bureau (known as Maikelawi) in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Some or all of the missing detainees may be in secret detention in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian authorities have released 23 people, including Halima Badrouline Hussein and her children, the youngest just four years old, who were freed on 4 May. Further releases are expected. Kenya closed its border with Somalia in early January 2007, cutting off escape routes for people fleeing the fighting that broke out in late 2006 (see the Wire June 2007). Conflict between militias of the Council of Somali Islamic Courts (COSIC) and Ethiopian troops supporting the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia led to hundreds of civilian deaths and a mass exodus from the Somali capital, Mogadishu. After the COSIC militias were defeated, US and Ethiopian forces continued to carry out air strikes and ground operations to “root out” any remnants of COSIC and possible al-Qa’ida fighters.

Adivasi (Indigenous) communities in Kalinga Nagar, Jagarpur district, Orissa, appear to be fighting a losing battle as business interests increasingly encroach on their land. Recent talks between adivasi representatives and those of the Orissa state government ended in failure in May. Principal on the agenda was the displacement of adivasi settlements by the construction of a six million tonne steel plant by Tata Steel in the area.

In January 2006, hundreds of adivasis in Kalinga Nagar demonstrated against the creation of the steel plant. Violence erupted as the adivasis, some of whom were armed with bows and arrows, were attempting to stop the erection of a boundary wall. Detonators were set off at a ditch near the construction site as a delegation of four adivasis approached. During the resultant chaos, members of the police forces reportedly fired rubber bullets, teargas shells and live rounds at the protesters, killing 12 people, including three women and a 12 year-old boy.

The adivasi protesters belong to the Munda community and are affiliated to Bistapan Brodhhi Jan Manch (People’s Forum Against Displacement), a group campaigning against displacement at Kalinga Nagar.

Displacement affects millions of people across India. Between 1951 and 1990, more than 20 million people were displaced largely as a result of dams, mining or irrigation projects in the country. Estimates suggest that at least 13 million of them have not been assured adequate alternative homes or land. Around 40 per cent of those displaced are thought to be Indigenous peoples.

Kalinga Nagar is being promoted as an industrial area by the state government-owned Industrial Development Corporation (IDCO). In the last five years, the Orissa government has signed 45 agreements to set up various industrial plants in the state. Of these, 13 major steel plants are being set up at Kalinga Nagar, where more than 100 chrome washing plants are already in operation.

The adivasis at Kalinga Nagar allege that IDCO has been acquiring their lands either through force or at a low price without their informed consent or participation and selling the same land to various companies for huge profits.

The police shooting last year occurred after months of protests from adivasis who claimed that they had received inadequate financial compensation for the land acquired from them for the proposed Tata Steel plant.

Demands for justice continue

Not satisfied with the state and national governments’ offer of monetary compensation for the families of the victims of the police shooting, the adivasis have made broader demands for justice as well as addressing their land rights claims.

The May talks came in the wake of the dismantling of a barricade preventing access to the proposed Tata plant site. Adivasis protested lifted the 14-month long highway blockade in March, following negotiations with the Orissa government. Discussions so far, however, have left little in the way of practical solutions. Questions over displacement are yet to be resolved. The judicial inquiry into the 2006 shooting is not yet over. And the protests continue. At the end of June, social movements from across India held a national convention against displacement caused by industrial projects, in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa.

Act now for Darfur
Riga Pride 2007
Control Arms – people’s consultation

Worldwide Appeals

• Lawyer detained in mental hospital in Viet Nam
• Teenagers ill-treated in pre-trial detention in Azerbaijan
• Iranian Shi’a cleric may face death sentence
• No justice for murdered human rights defender in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Insider

Trafficking of women and girls in Greece
Child executions
Worldwide Appeals

2-3

4

1
Indifference fuels brutality, devastating women’s lives in Guatemala and Mexico

In the past decade, thousands of women have been abducted, raped, tortured and killed in Guatemala and Mexico. Women are often poorly attended or investigated, and perpetrators are rarely prosecuted.

Since 2001, more than 2,000 women and girls have been murdered in Guatemala, with a yearly rate that currently stands at about 580. The murder rate for women in the country is very high, but according to the 67 per cent of women over the age of 15 have been affected by violence in the home, school or workplace in Mexico.

A similar kind of apathy prevails in Guatemala, where sham investigations go hand in hand with a tendency to blame the victim for the crimes perpetrated against her. “They don’t care,” says Jorge Velásquez, of the National Human Rights Observatory in Guatemala. “The authorities report that they don’t want any more work.”

According to them (the authorities), Claudia’s death wasn’t worth investigating, he says Jorge Velásquez. “They identified and established four main reasons: (1) because of the place where she was found; (2) because she wore a necklace; (3) because she had a pierced navel; and (4) because she wore sandals.”

Tentative improvements

In Mexico, a federal law strengthening the right of women to live free from violence was passed earlier this year. A Special Prosecutor’s Office for Crimes of Violence against Women was also established. However, murders of women, in cities like Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, continue.

Domestic violence, including sexual abuse, within the home and family is widespread and is believed to be common in Indigenous communities, which are among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in the country. However, clients are shamed by cultural attitudes that disregard, deny or even condone violence against women, and a criminal justice system that continues to deliver justice, women in general rarely speak out against such abuses.

“Women in Guerrero have no access to justice,” says Neis Arias, a lawyer with the Mexican human rights organization Tlachinollan. Guerrero state has one of the largest and poorest Indigenous populations in Mexico. “The authorities are not sensitive to the situation of women who want to denounce the violence. They just tell you to make peace with your husbands and obey your husbands... they don’t want any more work.”

Tenfold rise in women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation in Greece

Aleksa was brought to Greece from a country in Eastern Europe. She told AI in January that she was trying to escape difficulties in her life and had hoped for a job that would allow her to support her family. A family friend put her in touch with people who “would help her migrate”. They were traffickers. She said they forced her into prostitution, subjected her to severe physical and psychological abuse, and sold her on to different traffickers at least three times.

The police detained Aleksa because she did not have the necessary documentation. While in detention she found that she was pregnant – she had been forced by her traffickers to have unprotected sex with clients. She had an abortion and, once back in detention,bled for several days. She only received medical treatment when another detainee put her in touch with a shelter for trafficked women run by a non-governmental organization (NGO).

Aleksa was offered protection by the Greek authorities only if she cooperated in the daunting ordeal of testifying against her traffickers at trial. “Now I am really scared,” she told AI. She is so afraid of the traffickers that she rarely ventures out of the shelter.

Some NGOs believe that trafficking for forced prostitution in Greece has increased tenfold in the last decade. Although the government has responded with a series of laws, most of the women have not been correctly identified and have therefore received no protection or other assistance. Some have been deported and deported but the vast majority remain hidden. Few traffickers have been brought to justice and the victims of their crimes remain unable to obtain justice or reparation.

WorldwideAppeals

Vietnam

Lawyer detained in mental hospital

Lawyer Bui Thi Kim Thanh is detained in a mental hospital where she has been forcibly injected with unknown drugs which have apparently left her unable to talk.

AI considers her to be a prisoner of conscience held because of her work as a lawyer for the Democratic Party of Vietnam (NDU), an unauthorized democracy organization. She also worked free of charge defending low-income families in her community who were seeking redress for property confiscated by the authorities. Like many other dissidents in Viet Nam, prior to her arrest she was subjected to threats and harassment by security officials.

Bui Thi Kim Thanh was taken from her home by police in the early hours of 2 November 2006. They drove her to a nearby hospital where they tried to have her committed. However, two psychiatric doctors reportedly assessed her and concluded that she was not suffering from any mental illness. She was then taken to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, where she is said to have been injected with unknown drugs for no medical reason and is now detained at that hospital.

The authorities reportedly offered to release her on condition that she did not speak about her treatment. She refused. Since then all visitors and deliveries for her at the hospital have been repeatedly declined. Before her family had been allowed to visit her.

It is not known what legal provisions Bui Thi Kim Thanh is being detained under and she is not known to have been charged with any offence or to be suffering from any mental illness. However, there are provisions in Vietnamese law for confinement to a psychiatric unit, administered locally without the need to go before a court. Other political and religious dissidents have reportedly been confined in the past in Bien Hoa Mental Hospital for non-medical reasons, and suffered ill-treatment.

AZERBAIJAN

Teenagers ill-treated in pre-trial detention

Three teenagers, Ruslan Bessonov, Maksim Genashklin and Dmitri Pavlov, have been detained since March 2005, charged with murdering another teenager, Vusal Zeynalov. All three boys allege they have been tortured and ill-treated since their arrest.

Ruslan Bessonov stated that on 14 March 2005 police investigators punched him and beat him with truncheons on his head and body. He said they hung him up by his legs, sat on his chest and stamped on his fingers. They allegedly threatened to tear out his fingernails, slam his genitals in a door, kill his mother and give him electric shocks. The other two teenagers alleged similar threats and beatings.

All three claim they were forced to sign confessions incriminating each other for the murder of Vusal Zeynalov. They all maintain they did not commit the murder and have alibis for that time. Family members believe the boys may have been targeted because of their Russian ethnicity, allowing the crime to be explained as ethnically motivated.

Court hearings have been repeatedly postponed for two years. When two hearings eventually took place in October and November 2006, one investigator admitted forging the signature of Dmitri Pavlov’s attorney on one of the protocols and of destroying documentation relevant to the case. During a court hearing on 1 June a state prosecutor asked the court to sentence the three boys to 10 years in a high-security prison. Local journalists were not admitted into the court room.

It is concerned that the boys may be further tortured or ill-treated while in detention, and that their trial will fail to comply with international standards.
Iran - the last execution of children

Two weeks after his 18th birthday in 2006, Sina Paymard (left) was taken to the gallows to be hanged for murder. As he stood there with a noose around his neck, he was asked for his final request. He said that he would like to play the nay - a Middle Eastern flute. Relatives of the murder victim, who were there to witness the hangings, were so moved by his playing that they agreed to the request of defending all blood money instead of retribution by death, as is allowed under Iranian law. Sina Paymard remains on death row pending negotiations with the victim's family.

There are many children, including Sina Paymard, sentenced to death in Iran for crimes of which they are convicted. Children as young as 14 can be tried and sentenced to death, as is allowed under Iranian law. Iran has the shameful status of currently being the world's sole executioner of children – people convicted of crimes committed when they were below the age of 18. It also holds the macabre distinction of having executed more child offenders (24) than any other country in the world since 1990. Eleven of those sentenced to death were still aged under 18 when executed.

Today, Al is known as a child offender on death row, but the true figure is probably much higher. They prosecuted him (right), convicted of a murder committed when she was 17, and Hossein Garabaghi, who was 14 when he allegedly stabbed a friend to death during a fight. In most cases, child offenders sentenced to death in Iran are kept in prison until they reach 18, before being executed. In this period, some wins appeals or are released because the murder's family has pardoned

Elsewhere in the world, executions of child offenders have all but stopped, reflecting the widespread recognition that because of children's immaturity, impulsiveness, vulnerability and capacity for rehabilitation, their lives should never be written off – however heinous the crimes of which they are convicted.

A growing movement has emerged in Iran to challenge the basis of the death penalty for child offenders. It is driven by courageous human rights defenders and activists who campaign on their behalf and against death sentences, including in talks with the authorities.

Iran has the shameful status of currently being the world's sole executioner of child offenders – people convicted of crimes committed when they were below the age of 18. It also holds the macabre distinction of having executed more child offenders (24) than any other country in the world since 1990. Eleven of those sentenced to death were still aged under 18 when executed.

Today, Al is known as a child offender on death row, but the true figure is probably much higher. They prosecuted him (right), convicted of a murder committed when she was 17, and Hossein Garabaghi, who was 14 when he allegedly stabbed a friend to death during a fight. In most cases, child offenders sentenced to death in Iran are kept in prison until they reach 18, before being executed. In this period, some wins appeals or are released because the murder's family has pardoned

Elsewhere in the world, executions of child offenders have all but stopped, reflecting the widespread recognition that because of children's immaturity, impulsiveness, vulnerability and capacity for rehabilitation, their lives should never be written off – however heinous the crimes of which they are convicted.

A growing movement has emerged in Iran to challenge the basis of the death penalty for child offenders. It is driven by courageous human rights defenders and activists who campaign on their behalf and against death sentences, including in talks with the authorities.

Iran has the shameful status of currently being the world's sole executioner of child offenders – people convicted of crimes committed when they were below the age of 18. It also holds the macabre distinction of having executed more child offenders (24) than any other country in the world since 1990. Eleven of those sentenced to death were still aged under 18 when executed.

Today, Al is known as a child offender on death row, but the true figure is probably much higher. They prosecuted him (right), convicted of a murder committed when she was 17, and Hossein Garabaghi, who was 14 when he allegedly stabbed a friend to death during a fight. In most cases, child offenders sentenced to death in Iran are kept in prison until they reach 18, before being executed. In this period, some wins appeals or are released because the murder's family has pardoned

Elsewhere in the world, executions of child offenders have all but stopped, reflecting the widespread recognition that because of children's immaturity, impulsiveness, vulnerability and capacity for rehabilitation, their lives should never be written off – however heinous the crimes of which they are convicted.

A growing movement has emerged in Iran to challenge the basis of the death penalty for child offenders. It is driven by courageous human rights defenders and activists who campaign on their behalf and against death sentences, including in talks with the authorities.

Iran has the shameful status of currently being the world's sole executioner of child offenders – people convicted of crimes committed when they were below the age of 18. It also holds the macabre distinction of having executed more child offenders (24) than any other country in the world since 1990. Eleven of those sentenced to death were still aged under 18 when executed.

Today, Al is known as a child offender on death row, but the true figure is probably much higher. They prosecuted him (right), convicted of a murder committed when she was 17, and Hossein Garabaghi, who was 14 when he allegedly stabbed a friend to death during a fight. In most cases, child offenders sentenced to death in Iran are kept in prison until they reach 18, before being executed. In this period, some wins appeals or are released because the murder's family has pardoned

Elsewhere in the world, executions of child offenders have all but stopped, reflecting the widespread recognition that because of children's immaturity, impulsiveness, vulnerability and capacity for rehabilitation, their lives should never be written off – however heinous the crimes of which they are convicted.

A growing movement has emerged in Iran to challenge the basis of the death penalty for child offenders. It is driven by courageous human rights defenders and activists who campaign on their behalf and against death sentences, including in talks with the authorities.
Act now to protect civilians displaced by war in Darfur

In Darfur, millions of civilians continue to suffer the consequences of the conflict. In addition to 2 million internally displaced, tens of thousands have been forced from their homes in the past couple of months. Many have fled to neighbouring Chad.

In a recent meeting with Amr Musa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, AI’s Secretary General, Irene Khan, discussed the need to deploy international peacekeepers to Darfur to protect civilians and strengthen the arms embargo.

AI is calling on Sudan’s government to facilitate the immediate and full deployment of a joint African Union and UN peacekeeping force to contribute to the protection of civilians in Darfur.

Sign AI’s Global Petition

AI launched a Global Petition on 12 June, urging the government of Sudan to:

• accept and facilitate the immediate and full deployment to Darfur of the joint African Union and UN peacekeeping force
• take all effective measures to disarm the Janjawid and respect the UN arms embargo
• immediately halt indiscriminate attacks against civilians
• co-operate with the International Criminal Court and hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable through fair trials and without applying the death penalty.

Sign the petition at www.amnesty.org/noise

More than 400 people demonstrated their support for the rights of Latvia’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities at the Riga Pride march on 3 June. Among them were the Latvia organization Mozaika and 70 AI activists from eight European countries.

Thanks in part to AI’s lobbying efforts, this year participants could see safety knowing the police were there to protect them.

“This wasn’t a casual stroll around central Riga,” recalls Simons Dejardins, an AI activist and Pride participant. “We held the march in a park [Vermane Garden] enclosed by an iron fence and loads of policemen, reputedly as many as 1,600, many of whom were decked out in full riot gear.” Counter-demonstrators surrounded Vermane Garden, screaming abuse and, according to Simons Dejardins, “launching the occasional firecracker at us.”

Despite the heavy police presence, a homemade explosive device was lobbed at a group of Pride marchers as they left the park. No one was seriously injured and the Latvian police swiftly arrested those responsible. After the march, police bussed participants to safe locations in Riga.

This was a marked improvement on previous years. In 2005 and 2006, similar events in Riga had either been banned by the Latvian authorities, or attacked by counter-demonstrators. In 2006, counter-demonstrators threw eggs and human excrement at participants in Pride events. Neither in 2005 nor 2006 did the Latvian law enforcement authorities take sufficient steps to protect the rights to freedom of assembly and expression for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. This year, prior to the event, AI informed the Latvian authorities that it would attend the Pride march. It called on them to provide adequate police protection to enable the demonstration to take place unhindered.

Celebrating rights, taking global action in Latvia

So far, more than 80 governments have sent their views on arms control to the UN Secretary-General following lobbying by the Control Arms campaign, a record number for this type of UN consultation.

Since February 2007 the Control Arms campaign has led People’s Consultations in more than 40 countries, in parallel with the UN Secretary-General’s consultation on arms control.

Activists around the world have held community, regional and national forums to give people and communities a voice. They have urged their governments to submit strong, positive recommendations to the UN to support an Arms Trade Treaty.

The outcome is due to be presented to government officials at the October 2007 meeting of the UN General Assembly Disarmament and International Security Committee.

For more information and to get involved, please visit www.controlarms.org

Opinions wanted

• Are you an international member?
• Do you live in a country that is not served by an AI office?
• Do you want to help improve the Wire?

If so, we want to hear from you. Many of you responded to our 2005 survey– thank you! We are now looking for individuals to take part in a readers’ panel to help us improve the way we bring news stories to you.

If you are interested in being a part of this process, please email us at newslett@amnesty.org (using the subject header: “Readers’ panel”), or write to the Wire at the address below.

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom
www.amnesty.org
email: newsletter@amnesty.org
subscriptions: pppsteam@amnesty.org