Torture and killing rise in Punjab

SYSTEMATIC torture, as well as extrajudicial killings and some "disappearances" from police custody continue to be reported in Punjab. This Indian state, where armed opposition groups are demanding an independent Sikh state ("Khalistan"), has been under direct rule from the union government in New Delhi since May 1987. Sikh groups have been responsible for politically motivated killings of hundreds of police, members of the security forces and civilians. The security forces have persistently been accused of executing political activists in staged "encounters," even after the government announced in April 1990 that a 30 August 1989 police order offering awards for the "liquidation" of "terrorists" had been withdrawn.

Several thousand people are estimated to be detained in Punjab. Important legal safeguards to protect detainees have been suspended or weakened under preventive detention laws and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. In other cases safeguards are simply ignored and people are arbitrarily detained. Unacknowledged and incommunicado detention, sometimes at secret locations, has facilitated a pattern of torture, and police have sometimes flaunted High Court orders to trace "disappeared" detainees.

Women have been increasingly subjected to ill-treatment and torture. Gurmeet Kaur and Gurdev Kaur were tortured in August 1989 during interrogation about their husbands' whereabouts. They were beaten and had wooden bars rolled up and down their legs. Other common methods of torture include forcing the legs apart to cause pelvic injury and hanging people from the ceiling upside-down. Electric shocks have also been used.

Political prisoners have allegedly been killed while in police custody. Such cases are difficult to investigate, as police officials often deny knowledge of arrests, or claim that a person "escaped" or died in "encounters" with the police.

Many "disappearances" remain unresolved. Baldev Singh, for example, was only 15 years old when arrested in October 1988. Although his twin brother was released, relatives have been unable to establish Baldev Singh's fate or whereabouts. In August 1990 relatives wrote to AI asking for assistance in tracing him.

Human rights abuses were widespread in Punjab under the Congress government and continued under the National Front coalition government. AI is calling on the new government in India to halt human rights violations and investigate past abuses.

Candidates urged to protect human rights

AN AI delegation visited Guatemala in October 1990. At the first press conference the organization has ever held in the country, the delegation released an open letter calling on the candidates in the November presidential elections to outline the steps they would take to improve the human rights situation in Guatemala. The press conference drew attention to AI's recent report on abuses against street children and received major coverage in the local press and on Guatemalan radio and television.

The delegation also met with government officials, local human rights groups, independent organizations and victims of recent abuses. In particular the delegates sought information about the ongoing investigation into the case of 13-year-old street child Nahaman Carmona López who died in hospital in March after a brutal attack by the police. Four policemen were arrested and charged in connection with the crime and the evidence against them includes compelling eye-witness accounts.

However, out of thousands of cases of human rights violations reported in Guatemala in recent years, AI knows of only one instance in which criminal charges have led to convictions against security force personnel. In 1988 six policemen were convicted and imprisoned for the 1987 kidnapping and murder of two Quetzaltenango agronomists. Despite strong forensic evidence linking them to the crime, they were released in July 1990 after an appeal court overturned their convictions.

AI’s delegation also took testimony concerning the attempted abduction on 14 October of a young girl who is the sole survivor and key witness to the abduction of five street children in June. Two of the other victims have "disappeared," and two were found dead, horribly mutilated.

Another street child, eight-year-old Hugo René López Rivera, was found dead on 25 October, showing signs of a savage beating, haemorrhaging and strangulation.

The 16-year-old street child pictured above was beaten after being taken away by police officers. The case was not recorded on police files.

Hugo López was one of the street children who found Nahaman Carmona unconscious in the street, and thinking he was dead, put white crepe paper over him, customary when children die in Guatemala. Since the fatal police attack on Nahaman Carmona, any street children believed by the police to have information about the circumstances of his death have been repeatedly harassed, interrogated and sometimes beaten.

*Guatemala: Extrajudicial Executions and Human Rights Violations against Street Children (AMR 34/3790).*
CAMPAIGN FOR PRISONERS OF THE MONTH

Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In no circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

**BURKINA FASO**

Seni Konanda and Sié Souleymane Coulibaly: the president of the National Association of Burkinabé Students (ANE), and an ANEB executive committee member respectively, they have been held without charge or trial since their arrest following student protests in May 1990.

At the beginning of May ANEB presented a number of demands to the university authorities, including the right to use rooms at the university for ANEB meetings. When this was refused, students occupied rooms at the university in protest. The police and army intervened and 10 students were dismissed from the university.

More than 40 students were arrested when police dispersed further demonstrations to demand negotiations with the university authorities and the reinstatement of the dismissed students. Although many were subsequently released, four are still held in incommunicado detention in Ouagadougou, either at security service and police headquarters or at the Conseil de l'Entente building which is used as a detention centre. Eight other students were forcibly conscripted into the army and are held at Po, Dedougou and Koudougou. None of the students has been charged with any offence. They have been denied visits since their arrest and their families have not been informed of their individual whereabouts in prison or army barracks. AI regards all 12 as prisoners of conscience.

Reports of torture followed the arrests in May and a medical student, Boukary Dabo, died in detention, probably as a result of torture or ill-treatment.

The government has not responded to calls for an investigation into his death.

Please send courteous appeals for the immediate release of Seni Konanda, Sié Souleymane Coulibaly and other students detained since May 1990 to: Président Blaise Compaoré/Présidence du Faso/Ouagadougou/Burkina Faso.

**SYRIA**

Mufid Mi'mari: a 43-year-old teacher, he has been held without charge or trial since 1980 for suspected membership of the prohibited Communist Party Political Bureau (CPPB).

Mufid Mi'mari was arrested on 15 March 1980 under State of Emergency legislation in force in Syria since 1963. He was transferred from Kafr Soursh Prison to a detention centre in Damascus in February 1986, where he was interrogated by Idarat al-Amn al-Sivasu (Department of Political Security). He was reportedly held in solitary confinement and tortured to force him to renounce his affiliation to the CPPB. Al issued urgent appeals on his behalf in April 1986.

The CPPB was founded in 1973 after a split within the Syrian Communist Party. Its members have been arrested because of the party's non-violent opposition to the present government's policies and particularly to Syria's intervention in Lebanon since 1976. In October 1980 prominent members of the CPPB, including Riad al-Turk, the party's First Secretary, were arrested after the signing of Syria's Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union and attempts by Syrian political forces to form a coalition opposed to the government.

Over 200 members of the CPPB have been arrested since 1980. Some were released after short periods, but most remain in detention without charge or trial. Mufid Mi'mari is currently reported to be held in Saidnaya Prison, near Damascus.

Please send courteous letters appealing for the immediate release of Mufid Mi'mari to: His Excellency Khaled al-Ansari/Minister of Justice/Nasr Street/Damascus/Syrian Arab Republic.
AI's mandate is as relevant in the Asia/Pacific region today as it was 30 years ago. Thousands of prisoners of conscience are detained by governments across the political spectrum. Torture is widespread. Extra-judicial execution and "disappearance" are everyday occurrences. The death penalty is retained and imposed by most of the countries in the region.

The language of human rights violations is an international language. Prisoner of conscience, "disappearance", extra-judicial execution, and unfair trial, are words in common usage across the world. Human rights violations in the Asia/Pacific region also have local terminologies. Extra-judicial executions are known as "encounter" killings in India and as "salvaging" in the Philippines. In Myanmar torturers use the "iron road" - they roll an iron bar or a bamboo cane up and down their victim's shins until the skin comes off.

Human rights violations often occur when governments are faced with armed opposition. Throughout the Asia/Pacific region ethnic and nationalist tensions have erupted into protracted and bitter conflict. AI has frequently received reports of the torture and killing of prisoners by governments and by armed opposition groups in the context of armed conflicts. AI unequivocally condemns any such abuses, whoever the perpetrators. International law clearly states that no matter what circumstances they face, governments must never resort to torture and extra-judicial execution.

This region, the most populous in the world, encompasses some of the richest and poorest countries on earth. The last decade has seen widespread political upheaval, leading to increased respect for fundamental human rights in some countries - and a deterioration in others. All too often governments which came to power pledged to end human rights abuses have failed to do so.

The challenge for the 1990s is to build human rights awareness in the broadest sense of the term: to ensure that no government can cloak its illegal activities in secrecy; that the rights of even the poorest citizens are upheld; and to build a truly international movement capable of taking action against human rights violations wherever they occur.

I members in the Asia/Pacific region work on behalf of men and women wrongfully imprisoned all over the world. The barriers of language and culture have not obstructed their efforts. When Reverend Tshenuweni Simon Farisani, a South African prisoner of conscience and Dean of the Lutheran Church, went on hunger strike in early 1987, the Japanese section appealed to people all over Japan to write to the South African authorities. Dean Farisani was released some months later: he himself has acknowledged how the vast correspondence from Japan contributed to this. Since no one at his prison could read Japanese, the authorities translated thousands of letters, at considerable expense, only to discover that they all demanded "release Dean Farisani".

In their efforts to secure the release of their adopted prisoners, AI group members write letter after letter to government officials, judges, prison officers - anyone who might be able to help. At the same time, members seek to publicize the prisoner's plight in the local press, approach embassies, or ask influential people to sign petitions and support protests. To ensure their impartiality and independence, each group works in countries other than their own.

Does it work? AI does not claim credit for the release of any prisoner. But once a prisoner of conscience is "adopted", AI never gives up its efforts. And sometimes, even when there is no official response, the results can be rewarding. Two prisoners released in 1975 from the National Prison in Ho Chi Minh City (then Saigon) said afterwards, "We could always tell when international protests were taking place... the food rations increased and the beatings inside the prison got less... but when the letters stopped, the dirty food and repression started again.

AI members also take part in national and international campaigns to draw attention to human rights abuses in specific countries. These often highlight practices such as widespread detention without trial, torture, the death penalty, and extra-judicial executions.

AI's campaign against human rights violations in Brazil took place between September 1988 and February 1989. In Japan, members from 23 groups swamped the Brazilian authorities with appeals urging an end to the torture and extra-judicial executions of peasants involved in land disputes. The Japanese groups produced an informational leaflet and rapidly distributed all 7,000 available copies.

Across the Asia/Pacific region, such efforts are being carried out as part of the worldwide movement to put pressure on governments to stop human rights abuses. Today there are well-established AI sections in Hong Kong, India, Japan, New Zealand and Australia, active groups in seven countries and individual members and supporters in another seven.

AI is by no means the only representative of the broader human rights movement in the region. Women's groups have raised the banner of rights for women; the cause of children is championed by activists in many countries; the environment, housing and development issues have all been supported, often at great personal risk, by men and women all over the region. Some of them came into contact with AI because they became prisoners of conscience, and some have gone on to enlist others in the international struggle for human rights.

In 1965 the Indian Government declared human rights activist Mridula Sarabhai. She was adopted by AI as a prisoner of conscience. During her first months in jail, she received cards from AI members all over the world which helped give her the hope and courage to bear her incarceration. In September 1968, after her release, she helped establish the first AI group in India.

Ten years later AI India launched a campaign to persuade the Indian government to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, agreements which give legal force to the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Over 3,000 signatures were collected on a petition urging ratification. On 10 April 1979, during the course of the campaign, India acceded to the two covenants. A delegation from the section was invited to visit the prime minister and present the AI petition.

AI in India has continued to grow and members participate in appeals against human rights violations across the world. The Indian section played a leading role in AI's 1987 campaign for human rights in Kampuchea (now Cambodia); groups all over the country collected signatures on a petition, which was presented to the Kampuchean Embassy in New Delhi. In June 1988 the Indian section lobbied the British Embassy about human rights concerns in the UK following the publication of the AI Report: "Killing by Security Forces in Northern Ireland".

To support their worldwide campaigning work, AI members need to raise money for postage, stationery, the printing of campaign materials and the dozens of minor expenses incurred in the course of an action. Throughout the region, AI groups sell t-shirts,
handicrafts and greeting cards. Groups in Hong Kong participate in sponsored walkathons, and artists in New Zealand have donated their work to a charity auction for AI. Concerts promoting human rights work have been held in the Philippines, New Zealand, India and Japan. The Japanese Section persuaded 28 famous Japanese artists to contribute to the "Freedom '80s Poster Exhibition", which toured the country in a second-hand bus driven by volunteers.

The challenge to developing AI's campaigning program is complicated by the enormous number of languages spoken throughout the Asia/Pacific region. In order to reach the vast audiences, information and campaigns have to become completely multilingual. Funds are seldom available for extended translation work, but a grassroots volunteer effort throughout the region is making substantial inroads.

Newsletters are regularly published in Korean, Japanese, Urdu, Tamil and Thai. Future priorities include increasing the number of AI publications available in Chinese, and producing Bengali and Hindi versions of the International Newsletter. Groups in Taiwan are working on a Chinese version of the Prisoner of the Month appeal, and have produced leaflets and action materials for recent AI campaigns on behalf of imprisoned trade unionists and for human rights in South Korea. A number of international human rights standards, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have been translated and distributed throughout the region.

Key to the development of an effective multilingual program is the regional publications and distribution Asia Distribution Service (ADS), based in Hong Kong. ADS hopes to provide a wide range of translation and distribution services and eventually plans to offer facilities to produce and distribute cassette tapes, brochures and publicity materials specially tailored for the Asia/Pacific region.

Human rights education plays an indispensable role in mobilizing people to participate in the worldwide movement. AI groups use street theatre, seminars and exhibitions to raise public awareness of human rights issues. In Pakistan, the Lahore group produces plays on human rights themes, which tour in shanty towns and rural areas. The Madaripur group in Bangladesh organizes seminars and information stalls to coincide with International Women's Day, 1990. The group collected 10,000 sig-
of Human Rights Organizations (ACHRO), which aims to strengthen the work of individual organizations and enhance their capacities for human rights activism.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) was founded in December 1984. The AHRC is an independent body that seeks to promote greater awareness of human rights in Asia region, and mobilize public opinion to obtain relief and redress for the victims of human rights violations.

In acknowledgment of the growing influence of the Asia/Pacific region in the worldwide fight to end human rights abuses, AI representatives from around the world will meet in Japan for their next International Council Meeting (ICM). The 1991 ICM, the first to be held in Asia, will be attended by AI members from more than 70 countries.

Father and daughter Kang Hee-sul were released during the 1990 action on South Korea, and sent AI the following message: “We won! Thank you for your encouragement.”

Human rights violations in Asia and the Pacific

There has been little evidence of any trend towards an end to the detention of prisoners of conscience in the Asia/Pacific region. The release of thousands of long-term prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners has been confirmed in several countries over the past decade, but the Asia/Pacific human rights community must respond each day to new arrests. AI members in the region and around the world work towards the release of all prisoners of conscience - including those who have spent decades in prison or who have been unqualifiedly imprisoned and shamefully forgotten.

There is no monopoly on oppression by any one political system in the region. In Viet Nam “propaganda against the socialist system” continues to be punishable by imprisonment. In Indonesia writing or teaching deemed to be contrary to the official Pancasila ideology was the “crime” committed by scores of prisoners of conscience. In South Korea prisoners of conscience may be held indefinitely upon failure to “renounce” communist beliefs - they may have acknowledged holding or for owning a book that was published in North Korea.

The human rights catastrophes which reach the world’s headlines - the slaughter of demonstrators in front of the television cameras or the extrajudicial execution or “disappearance” of thousands - overshadow international attention on the very real personal tragedies of prisoners of conscience. Yet the systematic efforts of a prison regime to break a prisoner’s will may be paralleled in the outside world by the destitution, hunger and illness of their families. The deaths of children left without support by the imprisonment of their parents continues to be a cost borne by prisoners of conscience.

The deaths of thousands or tens of thousands are also a part of the Asia/Pacific region’s longstanding human rights panorma. For much of the 1980s bitter conflict in Sri Lanka provided the backdrop for thousands of “disappearances” and extrajudicial executions, facilitated by the wide powers bestowed on the security forces under a nationwide state of emergency in force almost continually since 1983. These violations by government forces reached unprecedented levels in 1989, as the security forces sought to suppress the armed opposition group Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna.

AL concerns in the Asia/Pacific region are long-term concerns. Torture in Afghanistan was already widespread and a focus for AI action before Soviet forces invaded the country in 1979. Information was particularly difficult to obtain, but it became clear, as AI disclosed in a major report in 1986, that prisoners in the custody of the Afghan State Information Services were routinely tortured, often in the presence of Soviet personnel.

Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in early 1989, but armed conflict - and gross human rights abuses - have continued. Increasingly, AI has been concerned in Afghanistan not only by the actions of government forces but also by the treatment of prisoners by the opposition Mujahideen, who operate in and exercise control over different parts of the country.

Human rights emergencies across the region have demanded immediate action. The mass movements calling for fundamental human rights which swept China and Myanmar at the end of the 1980s were suppressed by the killing or imprisonment of thousands of people. In June 1989, following the army’s deployment in the streets of Beijing, AI appealed to the Chinese authorities to prevent further arbitrary killings and to issue instructions to troops not to resort to the use of lethal force against peaceful protestors. The year before, similar appeals were made to the authorities in Myanmar (then Burma), when thousands of non-violent demonstrators were shot down.

Armed conflict, either domestic or with international dimensions, provided the context for severe human rights abuses throughout the decade. In the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, thousands of people have been arrested, and dozens of unarmed civilians deliberately and arbitrarily killed by government forces, in connection with measures to suppress a violent campaign for independence from India.

Since the mid-1970s armed opposition to the Government of Bangladesh in the remote Chitagong Hill Tracts has provided the context for widespread arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial execution of unarmed tribal people. Throughout the 1980s AI documented these violations.

In 1989 armed conflict erupted on the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, when a group sought secession for the island and compensation for environmental damage resulting from copper mining. The government declared a state of emergency which gave the security forces wide powers of arrest, detention and seizure. AI documented torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution by government counter-insurgency forces.

Human rights abuses continue even in countries where new governments have promised to stop them. The fall of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines in 1986 raised hopes of an end to the coun-
The extreme cruelty of the death penalty was clearly illustrated in Indonesia with the execution in February 1990 of four men who had spent over two decades under sentence of death for alleged involvement in the 1965 coup attempt. None of them were allowed to see their relatives before being shot.

The Indonesian Government sought to justify the long delay in carrying out the February executions on the grounds that the four were required as "material witnesses" in other trials. However, there have been no trials related to the 1965 coup attempt for over 10 years. AI believes political considerations lie behind these and other recent executions. The use of the death penalty in Indonesia has escalated sharply in recent years. The death penalty is in force throughout most of the region. In China unofficial sources allege that hundreds of people were executed after the Beijing massacre in June 1989. Judicial proceedings in China are swift and summary, with verdict and sentence often decided before the trial.

Since 1989, the youngest of the condemned prisoners was just 17 years old when his sentence was handed down by a military tribunal.

Three juveniles have been executed in Pakistan during the last decade. In Bangladesh Mohammed Slim was executed in 1986 at the age of 17, although the government disputed his age.

The world trend towards harsher penalties for drug-trafficking has been evident in Asia. In Singapore and Malaysia the death penalty is mandatory for possession of a specified amount of drugs. In 1987 alone 14 people, one of them a 69-year-old woman, were executed in Malaysia for drug-trafficking.

There has also been progress. The death penalty has been abolished in Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Cambodia, and its scope has been reduced in Nepal. In New Zealand the Prime Minister of Justice is empowered to refuse to extradite a person to another country if the laws of that country allow the suspect to be sentenced to death or executed.

China: Policemen prepare to shoot Wang Guiyuan and Zhou Xiangcheng, who were convicted of arson during protests in Chengdu which followed news of the massacre in Beijing. They were executed on 8 July 1989.

1989 saw a three-fold increase in executions in Taiwan since the previous year; over 69 people were put to death. Executions continued at the same rate in 1990.

In Myanmar over 100 people have been sentenced to death since July 1989. The youngest of the condemned prisoners was just 17 years old when his sentence was handed down by a military tribunal.

The death penalty has been denied access to research its concerns in several countries in the region. China, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka and North Korea have remained closed to AI. India denied access to AI delegations for over a decade. AI action has moved forward even on "closed" countries, however, as persistent research has produced substantial information about human rights violations in these countries. AI has presented several major reports on a broad range of human rights issues in China - and sustained action for the release of prisoners of conscience and an end to torture and the death penalty. Myanmar, too, has been the subject of several reports, continuing work for individual prisoners and concerted, worldwide membership action.

Recently, some governments have shown a greater willingness to discuss human rights with AI or allow access to their country. In 1989 AI visited Viet Nam for the first time in 10 years, and pressed for constructive contact with the government about a range of human rights issues. In 1990, a new Indian government agreed in principle to receive an AI delegation and to consider whether AI can have access to the Punjab and other areas in which human rights violations have been reported.

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Human rights violations continue

ON 5 December 1990 AI published a 64-page report entitled *Iran: Violations of Human Rights 1987-1990*. The report stresses that a pattern of serious and widespread human rights abuses continues. They include huge numbers of executions for both political and criminal offences; the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience; grossly unfair trials in political and capital cases; torture; and the use of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments.

The report examines the wholesale secret execution of political prisoners in the latter part of 1988. In many cases, the authorities have still not informed victims' families of their deaths, where they were buried. AI has recorded the names of over 2,500 prisoners alleged to have been executed, and believes the true total was far higher. In December 1988 the organization asked the authorities for information about 325 of these alleged victims. It has received no response. The authorities, in fact, have consistently failed to reply to requests for information on specific cases: they say simply that violations do not take place.

Many hundreds of prisoners of conscience have been detained in Iran, often without charge or trial. The report describes how over 20 people who had signed an open letter criticizing the lack of rights and freedoms in Iran were arrested in June 1990. Several of them were elderly, some had serious health problems, and it was feared that they might all be tortured to force them to make televised "confessions". In August AI asked the Iranian authorities for permission to observe their trial, but no reply has been received.

Other prisoners of conscience in Iran are serving prison sentences imposed after unfair trials before Islamic Revolutionary Courts. These trials often consist of little more than the pronouncement of sentence. Defendants may never even be informed of the precise charge against them. There is no legal representation and no right to appeal.

Unfair trials have also resulted in thousands of executions since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. In 1989 alone, over 1,100 people convicted of drug-trafficking by Islamic Revolutionary Courts were hanged.

The past two years have seen what appears to be a pattern of political killings of Iranian opposition activists in exile. In at least two of these cases, police investigations have revealed evidence that Iranian Government agents were involved.

AI has called on the Iranian Government to honour its commitments under the international human rights treaties to which it is bound, and to implement effective safeguards to protect human rights.

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Prisoners tortured and killed in Senegal

SINCE May 1990 a marked increase in violent opposition in Senegal's southern region of Casamance has been accompanied by disturbing reports of human rights violations by government forces. Abuses include both torture - reported sporadically throughout the 1980s in Casamance - and the extrajudicial executions of prisoners. The victims, mainly Casamance villagers, were apparently suspected by the authorities of launching attacks on government and civilian targets.

In September 1990 soldiers searching the village of Kanaw gathered the male inhabitants, forced them to lie down and beat some of them. Five men were taken away and shot. Their bodies were found later in a rice field.

The use of torture is reported to have increased, both in military barracks and at police stations run by the Gendarmerie. Between May and November at least 10 people were reported to have died from torture. At least one victim was handed over to Senegalese police by the Gambian authorities. Sékou Mary (known as Agnocone) fled to the Gambia in June 1990. In September he was arrested in the Gambia and forced to return to Senegal: he managed to escape arrest and return to the Gambia, but was again detained and this time delivered directly to Senegalese officials. He died a few days later, apparently after severe beatings while in Gendarmerie custody.

AI has appealed to the Senegalese Government to issue clear instructions to the security forces that the killing and torture of prisoners are forbidden by both Senegalese and international law. AI's appeals to the authorities to investigate reports of extrajudicial executions and torture have not yet received a positive response.

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Legal rights for religious believers

IN October 1990 the USSR parliament passed a new law regulating the activity of religious bodies and granting rights denied under previous legislation. Hundreds of religious believers have been imprisoned in the past for seeking to exercise these rights.

The "Law on Freedom of Science and Religious Organizations" came into force on 9 October. It guarantees religious citizens equality in all areas of public life and declares all religions equal before the law. Religious bodies may now apply to become legal entities by submitting their statute for registration and may then own property. Those registering as religious organizations are also liable to imprisonment. Those printing and distributing their own religious material were also liable to imprisonment. The new law does not provide for a civilian alternative to military service for conscientious objectors, although proposals are to be submitted to the next session of parliament. In November AI knew of at least 16 young men imprisoned as conscientious objectors in the USSR, the majority of whom had refused military service on religious grounds.
PERU

New wave of abuses

A temporary lull in reported human rights violations since President Alberto Fujimori came to power in July has been followed by a considerable upsurge in "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, including two massacres. In spite of his stated intentions to respect and promote human rights and to establish a national human rights commission, the President has not implemented specific measures.

On 22 August 16 peasants from the Iquicha community, near Uchuraccay, Huanta province, Ayacucho department, were reportedly killed by soldiers and ronderos (civil defence groups under military command), in what appears to have been extrajudicial executions. This incident occurred after Iquicha's community leaders refused to accept a demand made by the military and the ronderos to cooperate in a planned confrontation with Sendero Luminoso, an armed opposition group active in the area. Three days after the confrontation took place 50 soldiers and some 100 ronderos reportedly detained and shot dead 16 members of the community, including women and children.

In mid-October the beaten and bullet-ridden bodies of 18 people were found in a mass grave in the district of San Pedro de Cachi, Huamanga province, Ayacucho department. Nine of the bodies are reported to be those of a group of peasants, detained on 22 September by soldiers from the Castropampa military base and ronderos. The authorities had denied any knowledge of their detention.

Two prominent advocates of a multi-party system for Kenya, Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia, and a former prisoner of conscience, Raila Odinga, have been held under indefinite administrative detention orders since July, when the latest crackdown on critics of President Daniel arap Moi's government began.

Four other government critics - including George Anyona, a former member of parliament, and Edward Oyugi, a professor of educational psychology - are in prison facing possible 10-year sentences for "seditious publication." Their trial is scheduled for early 1991. At least 20 others, some of whom have been released on bail, are also awaiting trial and could face long terms of imprisonment for alleged possession of a "seditious publication" (such as Africa Confidential, a widely-read newsletter published in London) or a banned publication.

Several of those arrested since July 1990 are reported to have been tortured or ill-treated. They include Koigi wa Wamwere, an exile opposition leader with asylum in Norway, who appeared under arrest in Nairobi in mysterious circumstances in October 1990. He was charged with treason, a capital offence, together with two prominent lawyers. They were denied access to legal representatives and allege that they were tortured. No date has been set for their trial, in which five of their relatives will also appear on charges of concealment of treason.

KENYA

Critics of one-party rule imprisoned

Over a million members!

AI's membership has now topped the one million mark. Information compiled from the available membership figures for 1990 show that there are now more than 1,100,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in over 150 countries.

SYRIA/LEBANON

Reports of extrajudicial executions

At least 30 supporters of General Michel Aoun were reportedly extrajudicially executed following their capture by Syrian troops on 13-14 October 1990.

The killings occurred after a military assault by a joint force of Syrian troops and Lebanese Army soldiers was launched on 13 October against forces supporting General Aoun. General Aoun's forces were effectively defeated after fighting in which combatants from both sides were killed and which resulted in General Aoun's troops seeking refuge in the French Embassy in Beirut.

Many of the victims of the alleged extrajudicial executions were said to be soldiers from General Aoun's ranks who were stripped and had their hands tied behind their backs before being shot at close range. Some reports indicated that civilians, including children, were also extrajudicially executed by Syrian forces in villages considered sympathetic to General Aoun. Those killed apparently include 10 members of one family in the village of Deir Wahash.

AI called on the Lebanese Government to initiate an official inquiry into these allegations and to take measures to prevent any further killings. It urged the Syrian authorities to investigate the specific role of their troops in these incidents. AI also called on the Lebanese and Syrian authorities to ensure the safety of prisoners in their custody.

Papua New Guinea

Between early 1989 and March 1990 government security forces faced armed opposition on the island of Bougainville. They responded with torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions. AI's new report Papua New Guinea: Human Rights Violations on Bougainville focuses on 19 cases of extrajudicial execution or death after torture, and a further 50 cases of ill-treatment or torture by the security forces.

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